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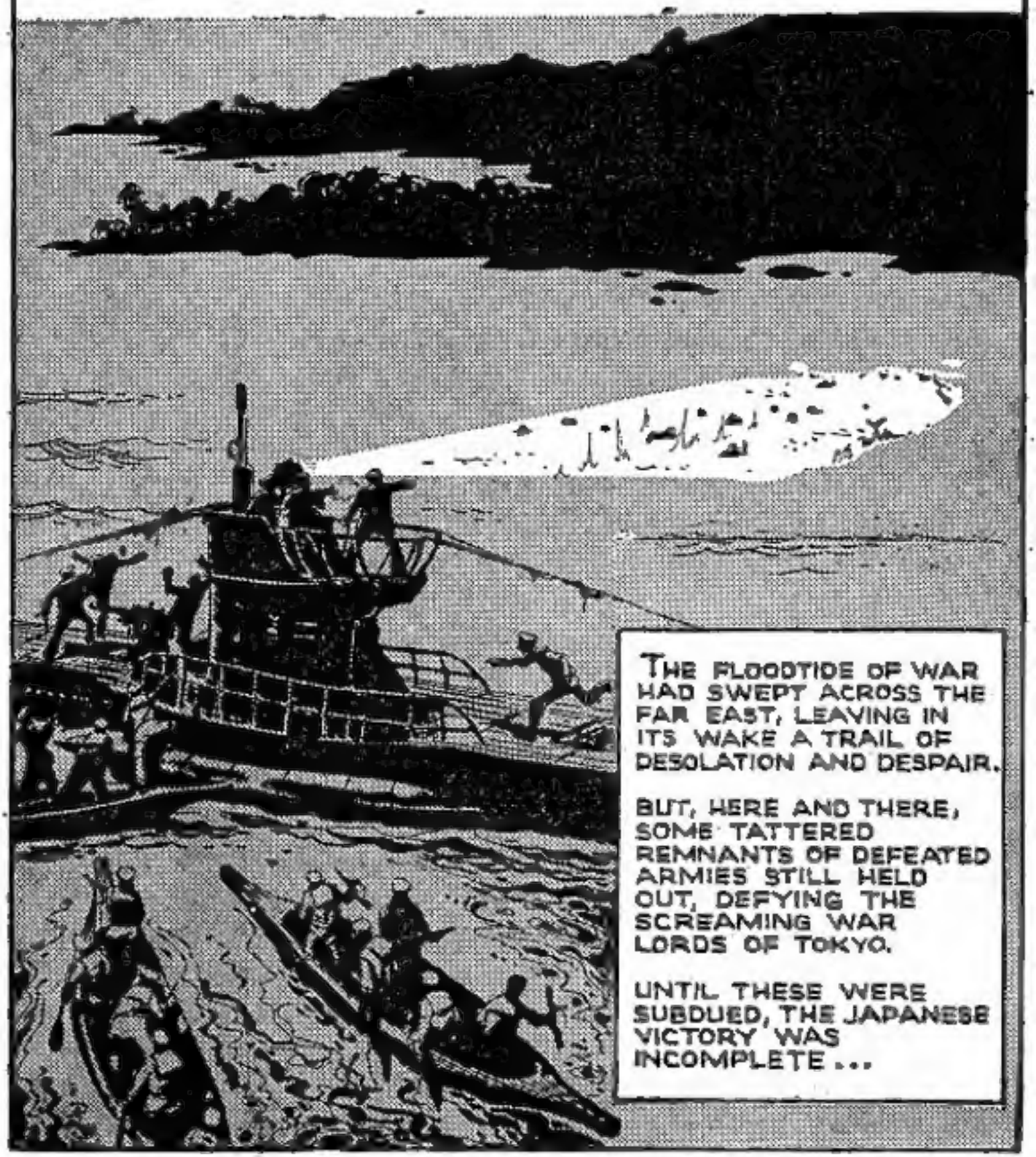

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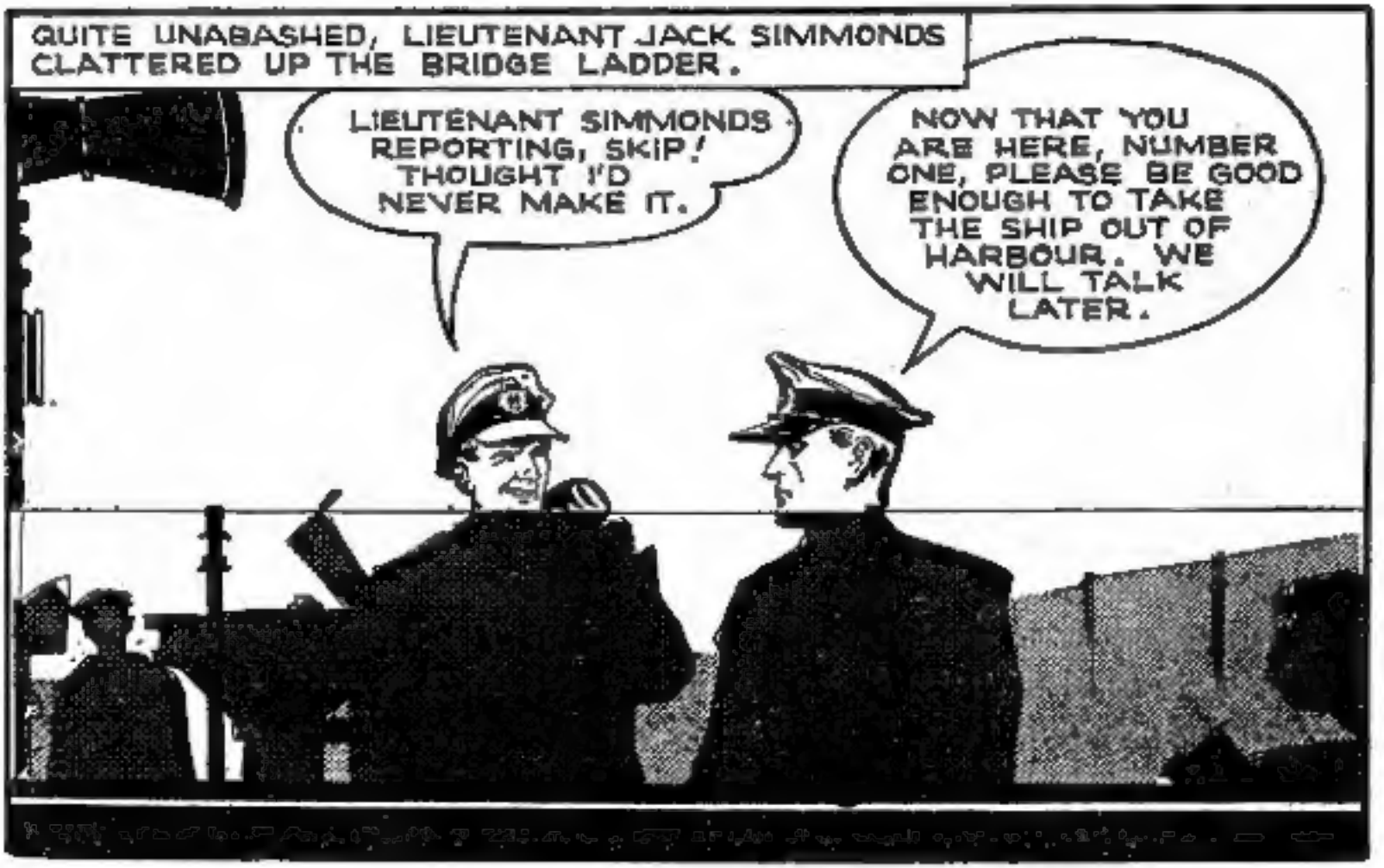
Chapter 1. Roughneck Lieutenant

THE EXPRESSION ON THE FACE OF LIEUTENANT-COMMANDER ARTHUR GARDNER, R.N. BODED ILL FOR THE NEW FIRST LIEUTENANT.
THIS FELLOW SIMMONDS HAD BETTER HAVE A GOOD EXCUSE OR WE'LL BE FALLING OUT RIGHT FROM THE START.

AT THAT MOMENT, A DECREPIT TRADESMAN'S VAN CLATTERED TO A NOISY HALT NEAR THE FOOT OF THE GANGWAY. A BROAD-SHOULDERED, SUNBURNED FIGURE SCRAMBLED OUT WITH A CHEERY GRIN.
HERE YOU ARE, SPORT! OLD 'WALTZING MATILDA' HERE MADE IT, AFTER ALL.
MY OATH, I NEVER THOUGHT SHE WOULD! SO LONG, COBBER —THANKS FOR THE BUGGY RIDE!

THE AUSTRALIAN NAVAL OFFICER SEEMED COMPLETELY UNAWARE OF THE SENSATION HE WAS CAUSING ABOARD THE BRITISH SHIP.
SHIP GANGWAY. STAND BY TELEGRAPHS. STAND BY TO SLIP! NUMBER ONE, REPORT DIRECT TO THE BRIDGE, PLEASE!
BETTER JUMP TO IT, SIR! THE OLD MAN'S IN A RIGHT MOOD!


QUITE UNABASHED, LIEUTENANT JACK SIMMONDS CLATTERED UP THE BRIDGE LADDER.
LIEUTENANT SIMMONDS REPORTING, SKIP! THOUGHT I'D NEVER MAKE IT.
NOW THAT YOU ARE HERE, NUMBER ONE, PLEASE BE GOOD ENOUGH TO TAKE THE SHIP OUT OF HARBOUR. WE WILL TALK LATER.

THE NEW OFFICER TOOK OVER THE TASK WITH THE EASE OF A NATURAL SEAMAN ...
CAST OFF, FOR'ARD! LIVELY THERE, YOU POMMIE LANDLUBBERS! LET GO, AFT! STONE THE CROWS, LET'S HAVE SOME ACTION! I'VE SEEN A KANAKA CREW MAKE A BETTER JOB OF IT!
WE OUGHT TO SIGNAL THE PORT ADMIRAL FOR 'PERMISSION TO PROCEED', SIR. SHALL I...?
FORGET IT, SPORT! IT'S ONLY A FORMALITY! LET'S HAVE LESS CHINWAG AND MORE ACTION. SLOW AHEAD BOTH. WHEEL, STARB'D HALF A POINT..!

THE LIEUTENANT-COMMANDER BARELY SUPPRESSED HIS RISING ANGER AS THE AUSTRALIAN SKILFULLY CONNED THE DESTROYER THROUGH THE CROWDED ANCHORAGE.
AHOY, THERE, SHEER OFF, CAN'T YOU? THIS HOOKER AIN'T GOT RUBBER SIDES!
OF ALL THE GHASTLY LUCK TO HAVE A ROUGHNECK LIKE THIS WISHED ON ME! WELL, HE'LL HAVE TO CHANGE HIS WAYS ABOARD MY SHIP...

IMMEDIATELY THE SHIP WAS CLEAR OF THE HARBOUR, GARDNER SPOKE...
ORDER A COURSE OF THREE-TWENTY DEGREES, THEN JOIN ME IN MY CABIN, IF YOU PLEASE, NUMBER ONE!
AYE AYE, SKIP! I'LL BE WITH THE OLD MAN IF YOU WANT ME, YOUNG 'UN.

IN THE PRIVACY OF HIS CABIN, GARDNER EXPRESSED HIMSELF FORCIBLY...
FAIR DINKUM LITTLE CRIB YOU'VE GOT HERE, SKIP! NOT LIKE MY 'GLORY-HOLE' ON THE OLD TAHITI STAR!
LOOK HERE, SIMMONDS, I'LL BE QUITE FRANK. YOU'VE MADE A VERY BAD FIRST IMPRESSION. YOU OBVIOUSLY KNOW YOUR JOB, BUT YOUR MANNERS ARE THOSE OF AN OUTBACK SHEEP STATION...

THE BIG AUSTRALIAN REGARDED THE BRITISHER WITH EASY-GOING AMUSEMENT.
AW, COME OFF IT, SKIP! I'VE BEEN SENT TO HELP YOU ON A SPECIAL JOB. WE'RE GOING TO BEAT THE LIVING DAYLIGHTS OUT OF A BUNCH OF JAPS, AIN'T WE? BUT DON'T ASK ME FOR PARTY MANNERS, AS WELL!

I INSIST UPON A CERTAIN STANDARD OF BEHAVIOUR IN MY OFFICERS, NUMBER ONE. YOU ARE NOT GOING TO BE AN EXCEPTION. YOU CAN CALL ME 'SIR' FOR A START!
MY COLONIAL OATH — I BELIEVE YOU'RE SERIOUS SKIP! AIN'T THAT A POMMIE ALL OVER?

JACK SIMMONDS' STEADY BLUE EYES REGARDED THE BRITISHER WITH AMUSED TOLERANCE.
THEY TOLD ME AT AUSSIE NAVAL H.Q. THAT YOU COVES FROM THE OLD COUNTRY WERE A BIT STUFFY. RECKON THEY WERE RIGHT, SKIP— I MEAN 'SIR'!
THAT'S BETTER! ALL RIGHT, NUMBER ONE, CARRY ON!

THAT MORNING, THE SHIP'S COMPANY WERE MUSTERED ON THE FOREDECK.....
... OUR MISSION IS TO BRING BACK SOME ALLIED PERSONNEL WHO ARE HIDING IN THE MENTAVEI ISLANDS. THEIR LEADER IS A DUTCH CIVIL ADMINISTRATOR WHO WIELDS GREAT POWER AMONG THE NATIVES. IF WE DON'T GET THEM, THE JAPS WILL!

AS THE MEN DISPERSED, THE CAPTAIN LED THE OFFICERS TO THE CHARTROOM.
WE'LL START AT ENGANO AND THEN WORK NORTH-WEST ALONG THE WHOLE CHAIN OF ISLANDS, SEARCHING EACH IN TURN...
AND WE'LL BE CLOBBERED BEFORE WE START, SKIP! THE SUNDA STRAIT IS STIFF WITH NIP WARSHIPS. THE COVES WE'RE LOOKING FOR WON'T BE ON THE ENGANO, ANYWAY. NOT IF THEY'VE GOT ANY SENSE!

GARDNER FROWNED AT THE INTERRUPTION...
KINDLY REFRAIN FROM INTERRUPTING, MISTER SIMMONDS. YOUR OPINION WAS NOT ASKED FOR!
WELL, YOU GOT IT ALL THE SAME, SPORT! I WAS SENT AS YOUR GUIDE BECAUSE I KNOW THESE ISLANDS. LOOK, HERE'S WHERE WE OUGHT TO START...

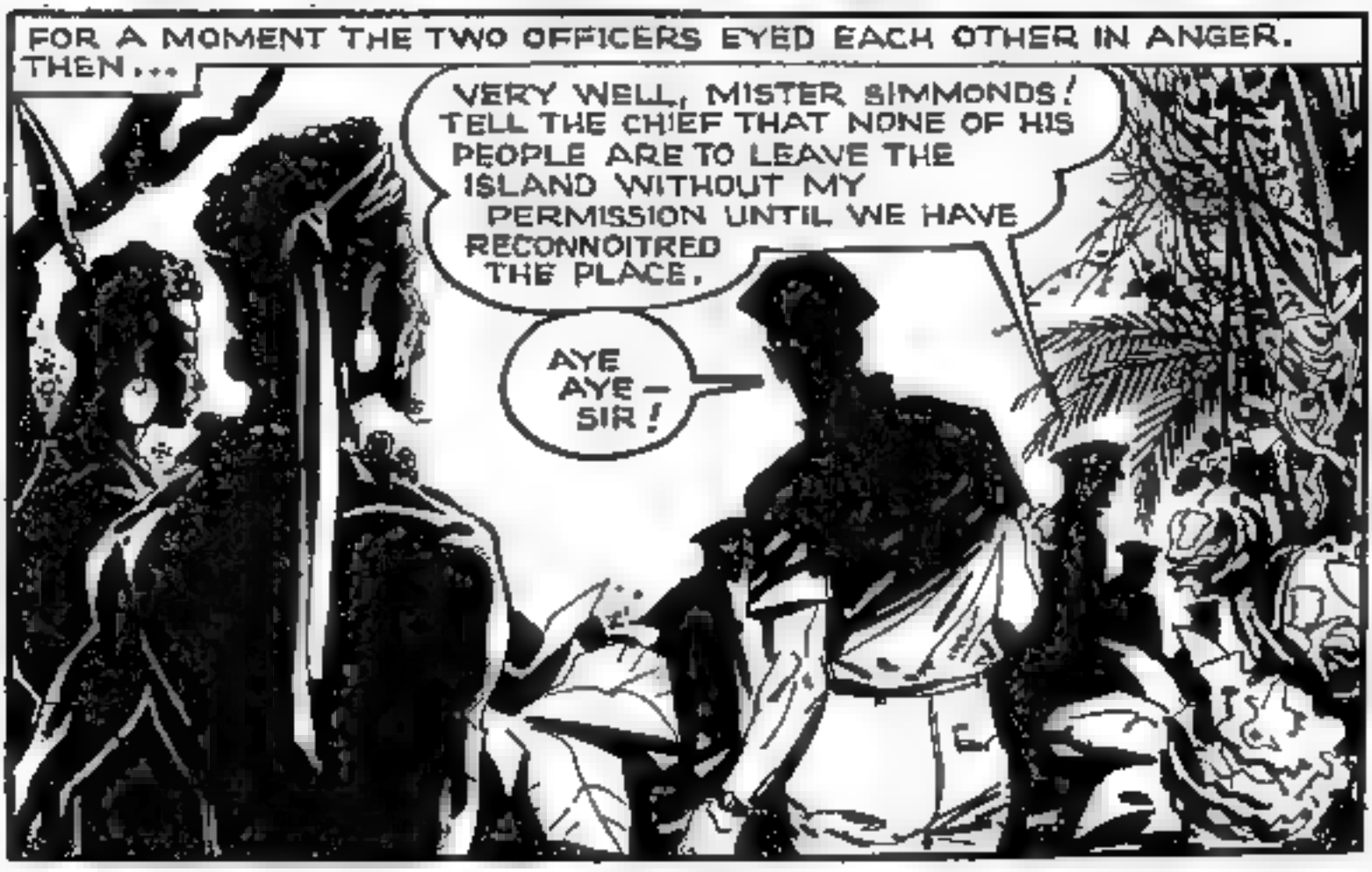
THE PLAN WHICH SIMMONDS OUTLINED WAS PRACTICAL AND THE BRITISHER GAVE WAY IN VIEW OF THE LIEUTENANT'S KNOWLEDGE OF THE AREA. TWO DAYS LATER...
THAT'S WHERE WE'LL HIDE THE OLD HOOKER, SKIP! THEN I'LL TAKE A DEKKO ASHORE AND QUESTION THE NATIVES. YOU COMING WITH ME?
NATURALLY! YOU MAY BE THE GUIDE AND INTERPRETER, NUMBER ONE, BUT DO I HAVE TO REMIND YOU THAT I AM IN COMMAND HERE? AND DON'T CALL ME 'SKIP'!

THE LANDING PARTY FELL IN, AWAITING THE ORDER TO MOVE OFF.
WHY ARE WE MOORING INSTEAD OF DROPPING THE HOOK, NOBBY?
USE YER LOAF, MATE! IF THE NIPS DON'T KNOW WE'RE 'ERE, THERE AIN'T MUCH SENSE IN CLANKIN' A CABLE THROUGH THE 'AWSE PIPES TO TELL 'EM!
PIPE DOWN, THERE! NO TALKING!

BUT THE ARRIVAL OF THE DESTROYER HAD NOT GONE UNNOTICED...
TUAN SIMMONDS! GREETINGS, MY FRIEND!
LUMME! CANNIBALS!
BELT UP, CHARLIE. THE NEW BLOKE'S GOING TO TALK TO 'EM! HEY, THEY SEEM TO KNOW 'IM!

A RAPID CONVERSATION IN THE INDONESIAN LANGUAGE FOLLOWED AND THEN SIMMONDS TURNED WITH A GRIN...
THE CHIEF SAYS THE NEAREST NIPS ARE ON THE NEXT ISLAND. THEY WON'T KNOW WE'RE HERE.
IT WON'T BE LONG BEFORE THEY DO KNOW — THESE NATIVES WILL BE ONLY TOO PLEASED TO TELL THEM IN ORDER TO CURRY FAVOUR.

GARDNER'S NEXT WORDS BROUGHT AN ANGRY GLINT INTO THE AUSTRALIAN'S EYES.
TELL THEM TO DROP THEIR WEAPONS AND MOVE OFF AHEAD OF US TO THEIR VILLAGE. I'LL KEEP THEM THERE UNDER GUARD UNTIL WE'VE SEARCHED THE AREA.
FOR PETE'S SAKE! I TELL YOU I KNOW THESE PEOPLE AND THEY HATE THE JAPS AS MUCH AS I DO — AND THAT'S PLENTY!


FOR A MOMENT THE TWO OFFICERS EYED EACH OTHER IN ANGER. THEN...
VERY WELL, MISTER SIMMONDS! TELL THE CHIEF THAT NONE OF HIS PEOPLE ARE TO LEAVE THE ISLAND WITHOUT MY PERMISSION UNTIL WE HAVE RECONNOITRED THE PLACE.
AYE AYE — SIR!

TAKING CARE NOT TO SHOW THEMSELVES, THE LANDING PARTY BEGAN THEIR TOUR OF THE ISLAND...

THEY WERE SKIRTING A SMALL BAY WHEN GARDNER SPOTTED A CANOE SETTING OUT FROM THE BEACH.
SO THEY HATE THE JAPS, DO THEY? HANGED IF THERE ISN'T ONE OF THEM ON HIS WAY TO WARN THEM THAT WE'RE HERE. BUT HE WON'T GET FAR...

THE SHARP CRACK OF THE LEE ENFIELD ECHOED ACROSS THE WATER AND THE FIGURE IN THE CANOE WAS SEEN TO CLUTCH SUDDENLY AT HIS SHOULDER.

THE IDIOT! IF HE'S KILLED THAT LAD WE'LL HAVE THE NATIVES ON US AS WELL AS THE JAPS. THAT'S THE CHIEF'S SON!

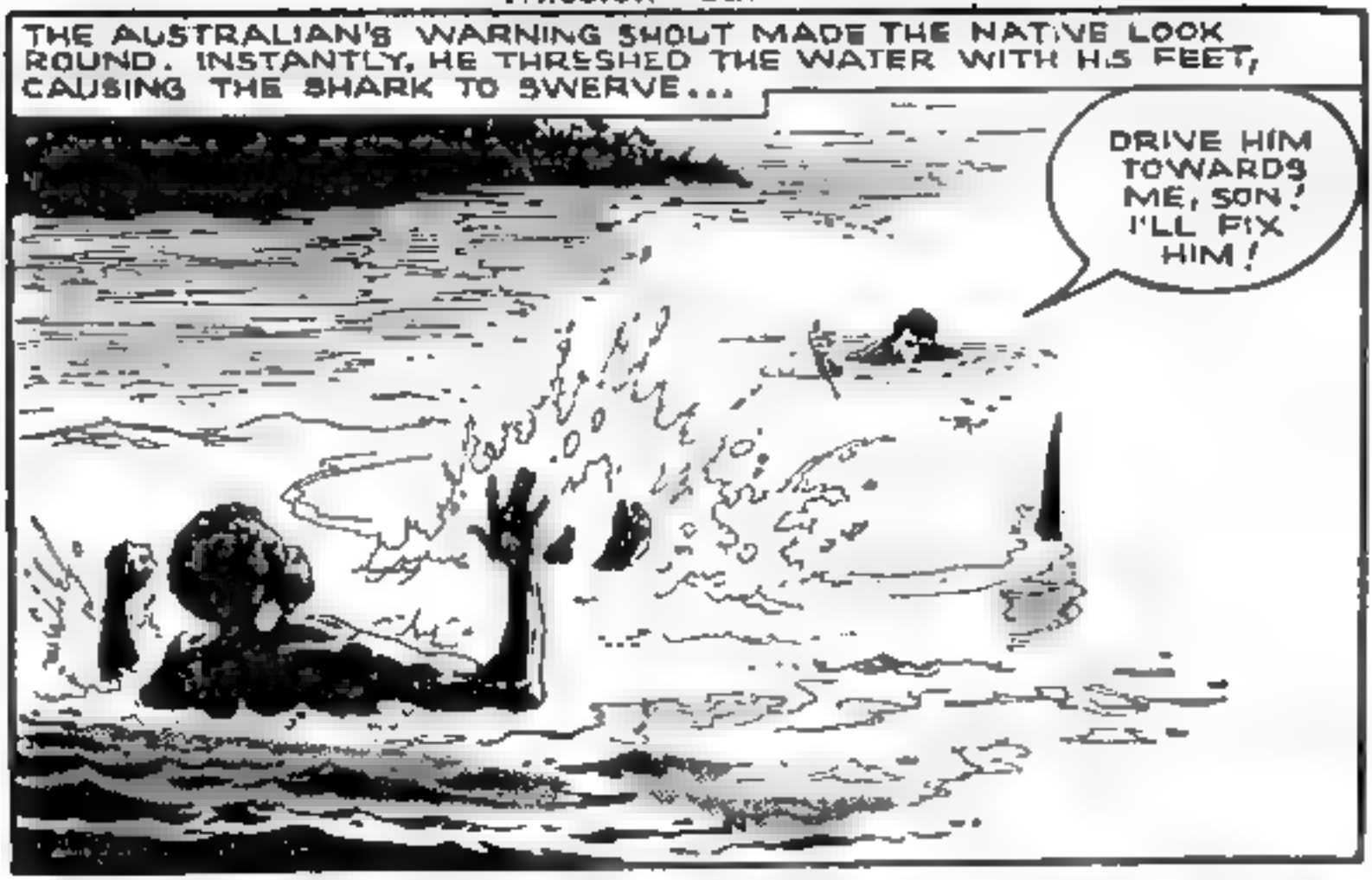
BEFORE THE LIEUTENANT-COMMANDER COULD FIRE AGAIN, THE MAN IN THE CANOE THREW HIMSELF OVERBOARD.

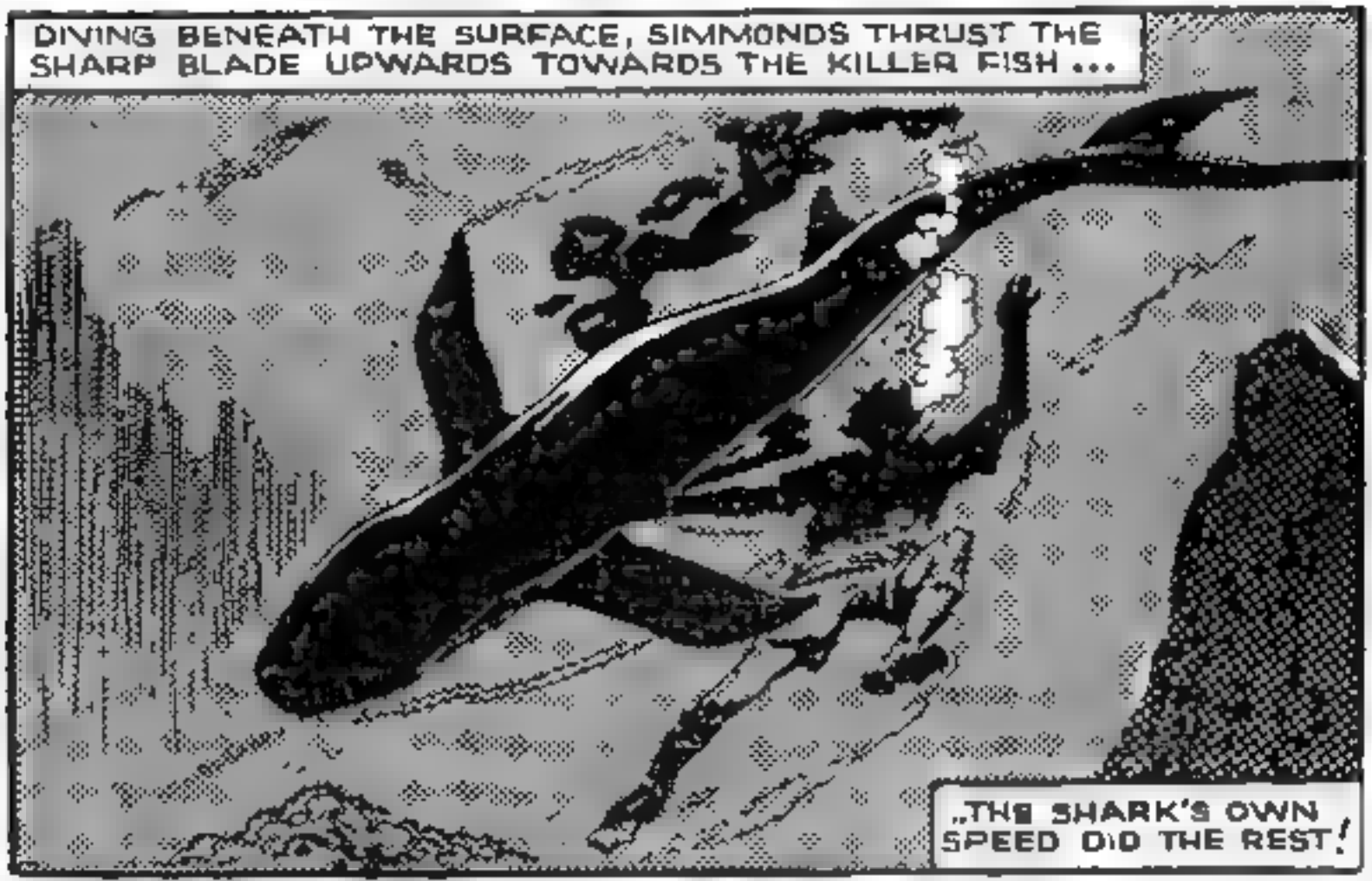
IF THAT MAN ESCAPES, HE'LL BRING THE JAPS AFTER US!

YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT! GOOD GRIEF! A SHARK!

WHIPPING A SHEATH KNIFE FROM HIS BELT, THE BIG AUSTRALIAN RACED DOWN TO THE BEACH AND PLUNGED INTO THE WATER...

COME BACK, YOU FOOL! THE JAPS MAY SEE YOU!


THE AUSTRALIAN'S WARNING SHOUT MADE THE NATIVE LOOK ROUND. INSTANTLY, HE THRESHED THE WATER WITH HIS FEET, CAUSING THE SHARK TO SWERVE...
DRIVE HIM TOWARDS ME, SON! I'LL FIX HIM!


DIVING BENEATH THE SURFACE, SIMMONDS THRUST THE SHARP BLADE UPWARDS TOWARDS THE KILLER FISH...
..THE SHARK'S OWN SPEED DID THE REST!

THANK YOU, TUAN! YOU SAVED MY LIFE!
FORGET IT, SON! HOW'S THE SHOULDER?

THE WOUND WAS NOT SERIOUS AND WAS QUICKLY ATTENDED TO BY THE SHIP'S DOCTOR.
YOU BROKE MY ORDER, SIMMONDS, BY SHOWING YOURSELF. IF ANY JAP ON THAT OTHER ISLAND REPORTS HAVING SEEN A WHITE MAN, WE'LL BE IN REAL TROUBLE!
LOOK, HERE, SPORT, IT'S TIME YOU COOLED OFF! AND I'VE TOLD THE CHIEF'S SON THAT THE SHOT WAS AN ACCIDENT!

...AS FOR THE JAPS, AT THIS DISTANCE, I COULD EASILY BE MISTAKEN FOR A NATIVE. NOW, FOR PETE'S SAKE, LET'S GET MOVING!

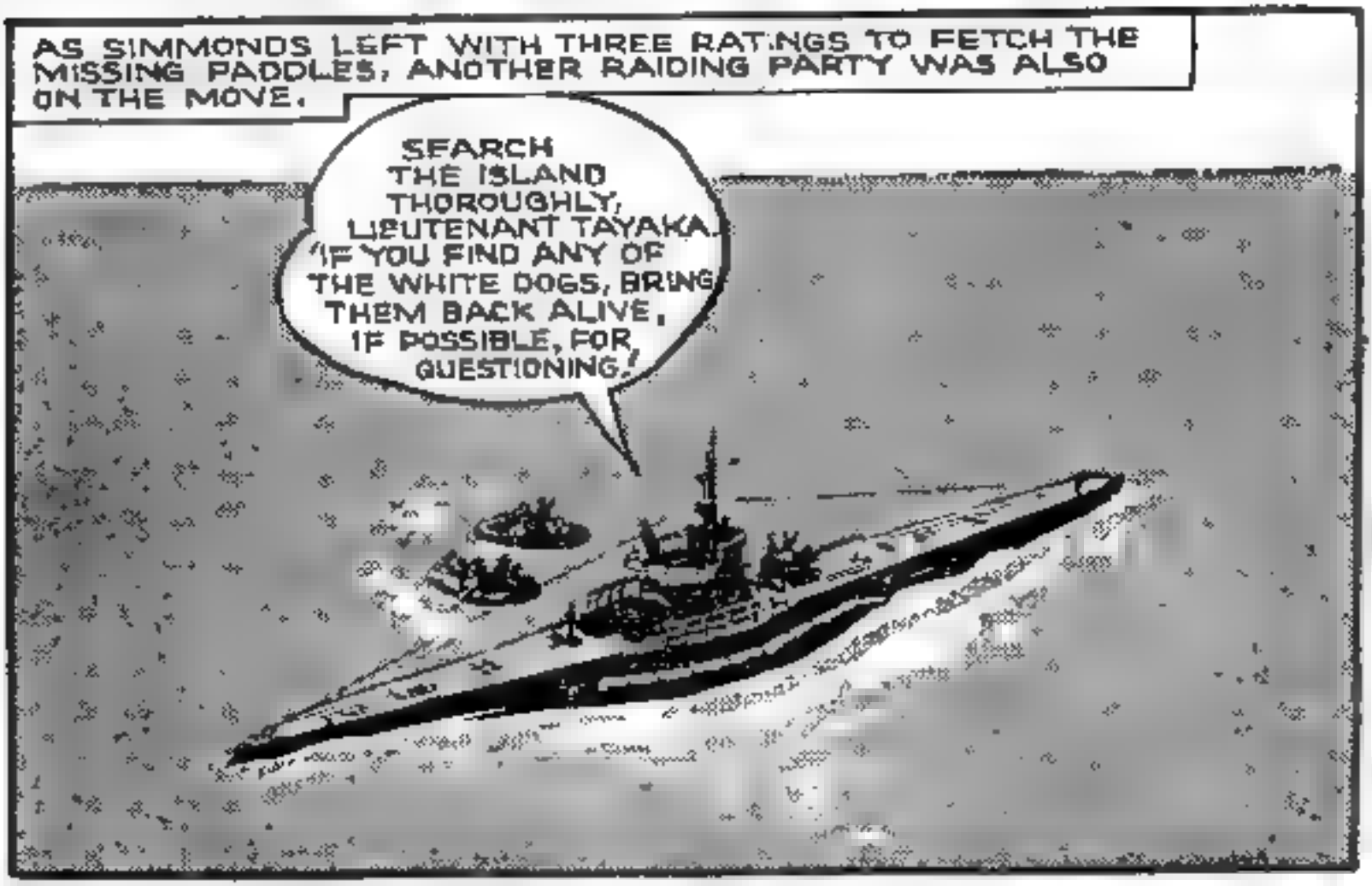
ANGRILY AWARE THAT HE HAD PUT HIMSELF IN THE WRONG, GARDNER IMPATIENTLY WAVED THE PATROL FORWARD ONCE MORE.
WE'LL DISCUSS THIS FURTHER WHEN WE GET BACK TO THE SHIP, NUMBER ONE!
TOO RIGHT WE WILL, COBBER— TOO PERISHING RIGHT!

Chapter 2. *Midnight Raid*

AFTER THE CONFERENCE, GARDNER TOOK THE AUSTRALIAN TO ONE SIDE...
NOW, LOOK HERE, SIMMONDS ... I'VE DECIDED TO SHELVE OUR DIFFERENCES UNTIL AFTER THIS OPERATION.
THAT'S BIG OF YOU, SPORT. YOU KNOW DARNED WELL I'LL DO MY WHACK!

AS THE LAST LIGHT OF DAY BEGAN TO FADE, THE RAIDING PARTY MADE THEIR FINAL PREPARATIONS...
COR! WE'LL SCARE THEM NIPS RIGHT OUT OF THEIR SKINS!
WE WON'T HAVE TO SHOOT 'EM — THEY'LL DIE OF LAUGHING WHEN THEY SEE YOU, NOBBY!
HMS
HMS

HALF AN HOUR LATER, THERE CAME AN UNEXPECTED HITCH.
THE PADDLES! WHERE THE DEVIL ARE THEY?
TAKE IT EASY, SPORT. THE NATIVES WILL HAVE THEM IN THE VILLAGE. I'LL GO AND FETCH 'EM!


AS SIMMONDS LEFT WITH THREE RATINGS TO FETCH THE MISSING PADDLES, ANOTHER RAIDING PARTY WAS ALSO ON THE MOVE.
SEARCH THE ISLAND THOROUGHLY, LIEUTENANT TAYAKA. IF YOU FIND ANY OF THE WHITE DOGS, BRING THEM BACK ALIVE, IF POSSIBLE, FOR QUESTIONING!

THE JAPANESE DINGHIES DRIFTED SILENTLY IN WITH THE RISING TIDE AND THEY LANDED FARTHER ALONG THE BEACH TO THE BRITISH SAILORS.
WE WILL RUSH THEM BEFORE THEY CAN RESIST. IF ANY ATTEMPT TO ESCAPE, SHOOT THEM DOWN LIKE MAD DOGS!

BUT EVEN AS THE JAPANESE CREPT STEALTHILY TO THE ATTACK, SIMMONDS AND HIS MEN WERE RETURNING WITH THE PADDLES...
NIPS! WE'VE GOT TO CLOBBER THAT LOT BEFORE THEY GET OUR MATES!

A BURST OF FIRE SWEPT THE JAPANESE LANDING PARTY...
NIPS, BY THUNDER! AND THEY WERE STALKING US!
THEY WON'T STALK ANYBODY ANY MORE, SIR! LUCKY FOR US MISTER SIMMONDS AND HIS BOYS SAW 'EM FIRST!
THEY CAME FROM A SUB, I RECKON, SKIP!
YES, AND SHE'S PROBABLY NOT FAR AWAY! HER CREW MUST HAVE HEARD THE FIRING AND THEY'LL BE COMING TO INVESTIGATE.

THE AUSTRALIAN'S FACE BROKE INTO A BROAD GRIN...
NO, SKIP! THEY'LL BE WAITING FOR 'EM TO COME BACK YELLING 'BANZAI'. DON'T LET'S DISAPPOINT 'EM. THEY'LL LET US GET ALONGSIDE BEFORE THEY SEE THEIR MISTAKE — AND THEN IT'LL BE TOO LATE!

THE BRITISHER'S STIFF AND STARCHY MANNER UNDERWENT A SUDDEN CHANGE.
A VERY GOOD IDEA, NUMBER ONE. BUT I'LL HANDLE THIS SHOW MYSELF. WAIT HERE WITH THE REST OF THE MEN UNTIL WE GET BACK!
WELL, SWIPE ME — ER — AYE AYE, SIR!

AS THE DINGHIES PUSHED OFF, SIMMONDS GAVE A PARTING WORD OF ADVICE...
DON'T FORGET TO SHOOT DOWN THEIR RADIO AERIAL AS YOU GO ALONGSIDE, SKIPPER — OR WE'LL HAVE THE WHOLE NIP NAVY LOOKING FOR US TOMORROW!
THANK YOU, NUMBER ONE! A SENSIBLE PRECAUTION!

FIVE MINUTES LATER, THE JAPANESE CAPTAIN CALLED SHARPLY DOWN AS TWO DINGHIES APPROACHED FROM THE DIRECTION OF THE SHORE.

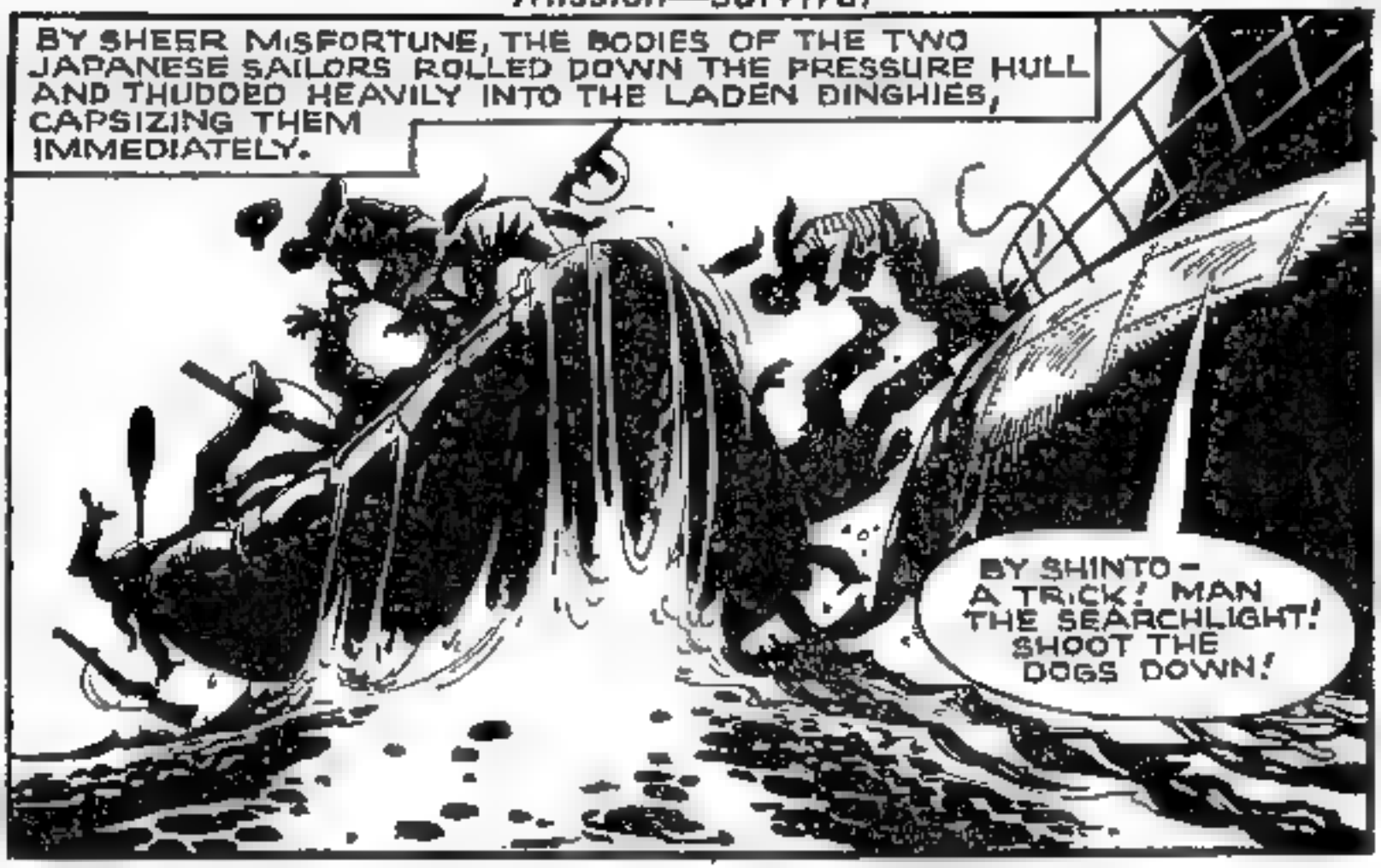
LIETENANT TAYAKA, WHAT WAS THAT SHOOTING? DID YOU FIND ANY WHITE MEN ON THE ISLAND? SPEAK UP, MAN! IT IS SOMETHING I SHOULD REPORT TO H.Q. AT ONCE BY RADIO—

BUT LIEUTENANT TAYAKA WOULD NEVER HEAR ANYTHING AGAIN AND THE MEN WHO HAD TAKEN HIS PLACE MADE NO REPLY...

ANGRILY, THE JAPANESE CAPTAIN REPEATED HIS QUESTION AND AT LAST A REPLY CAME ... IN A BURST OF STEN GUN FIRE.

LET 'EM HAVE IT, LADS! AH, NICE SHOOTING, JOHNSON! THAT'S THE AER.AL GONE!

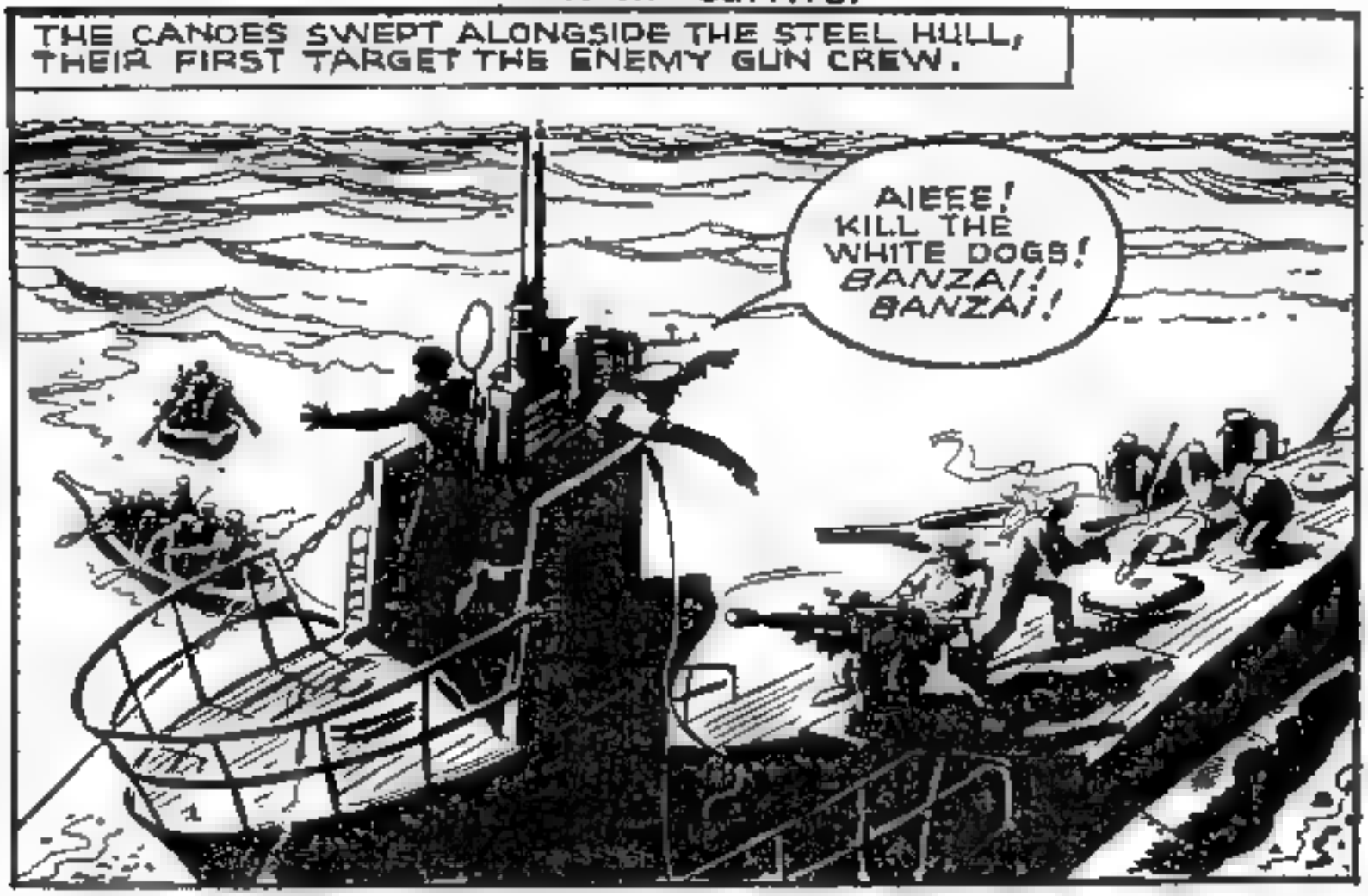
LOOK OUT, SIR!

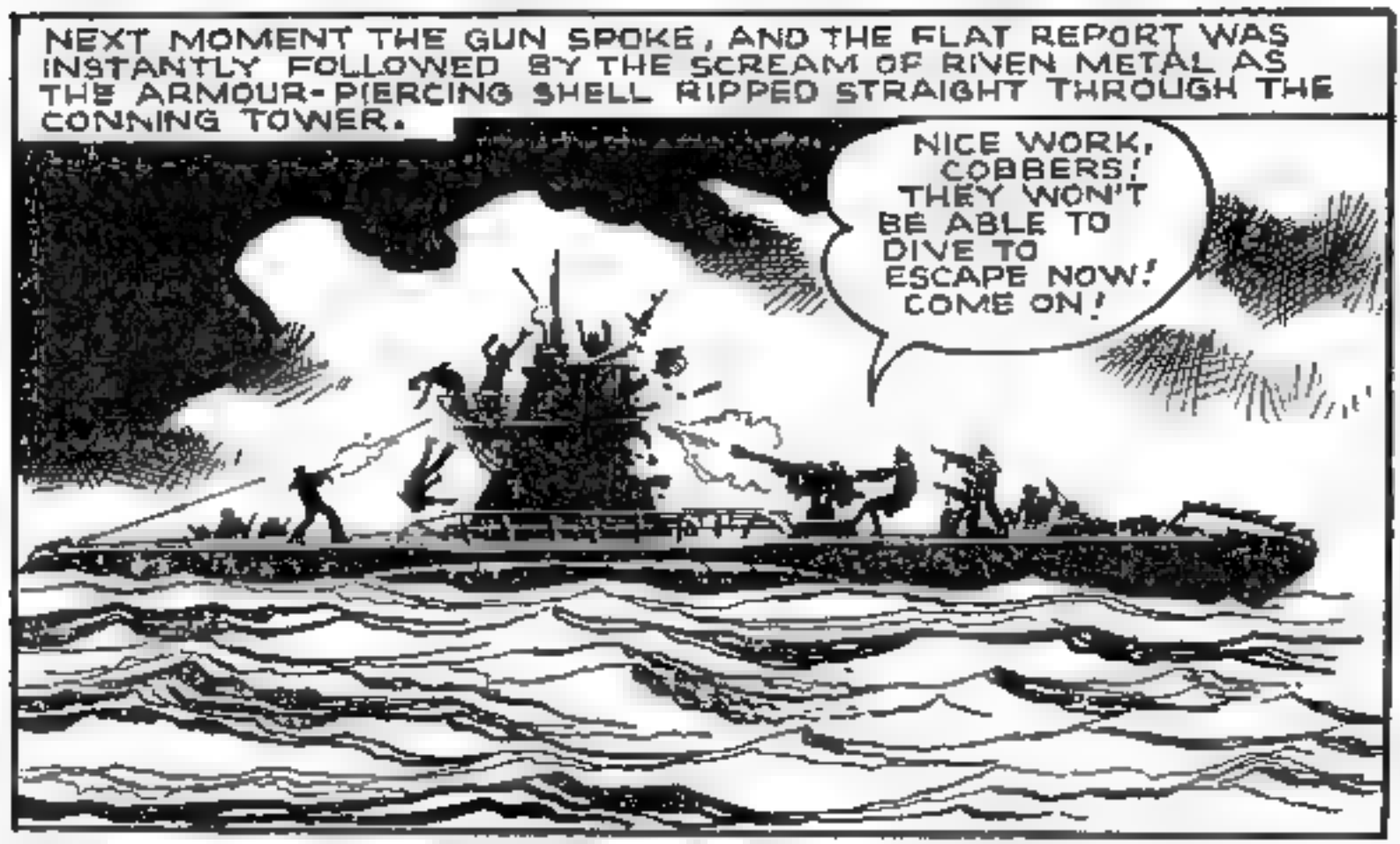

BY SHEER MISFORTUNE, THE BODIES OF THE TWO JAPANESE SAILORS ROLLED DOWN THE PRESSURE HULL AND THUDDED HEAVILY INTO THE LADEN DINGHIES, CAPSIZING THEM IMMEDIATELY.
BY SHINTO — A TRICK! MAN THE SEARCHLIGHT! SHOOT THE DOGS DOWN!

WITH A SPLUTTER OF ARCING CARBONS, THE SEARCHLIGHT BURST INTO VIVID LIGHT AS GARDNER AND HIS MEN SWAM FOR THEIR LIVES...
COME ON, CHAPS — BACK TO THE BEACH! SPREAD OUT. IF THAT SEARCHLIGHT PICKS US UP WHILE WE'RE ALL BUNCHED UP, WE'VE HAD IT!

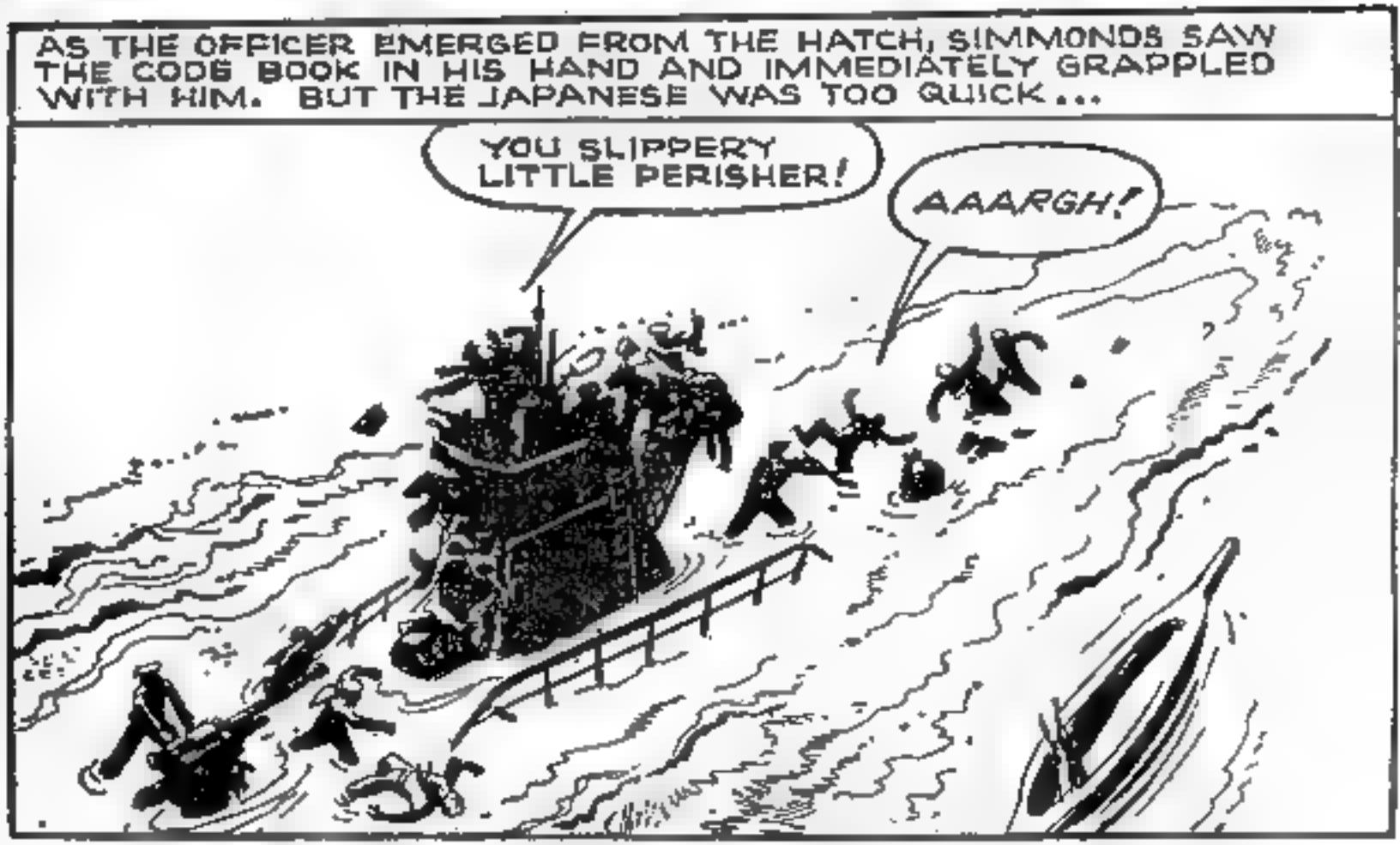
GUESSING THAT SOMETHING HAD GONE WRONG, SIMMONDS WAS SCRAMBLING INTO A CANOE AND CALLING TO HIS MEN TO FOLLOW ...
THE OLD MAN'S IN TROUBLE! COME ON, YOU BLOKES!

JUST AS THE SEARCHLIGHT AT LAST PICKED UP ITS TARGET, SIMMONDS AND HIS CANOES APPROACHED THE SEAWARD SIDE OF THE ENEMY VESSEL.
QUICKER, SPORTS! WE CAN JUST ABOUT CLOBBER THE YELLOW DINGOES IN TIME!


THE CANOES SWEPT ALONGSIDE THE STEEL HULL, THEIR FIRST TARGET THE ENEMY GUN CREW.
AIEEE! KILL THE WHITE DOGS! BANZAI! BANZAI!


NEXT MOMENT THE GUN SPOKE, AND THE FLAT REPORT WAS INSTANTLY FOLLOWED BY THE SCREAM OF RIVEN METAL AS THE ARMOUR-PIERCING SHELL RIPPED STRAIGHT THROUGH THE CONNING TOWER.
NICE WORK, COBBERS! THEY WON'T BE ABLE TO DIVE TO ESCAPE NOW! COME ON!

UNABLE TO ESCAPE AND UNWILLING TO SURRENDER, THE JAPANESE PREPARED TO SCUTTLE THEIR SHIP AND TO DIE FIGHTING...
SCUTTLE HER, SESSUE! I SHALL THROW THE CODE BOOK OVERBOARD! BANZAI!
THE SEA-COCKS ARE ALREADY OPEN. SHE IS SINKING FAST!


AS THE OFFICER EMERGED FROM THE HATCH, SIMMONDS SAW THE CODE BOOK IN HIS HAND AND IMMEDIATELY GRAPPLED WITH HIM. BUT THE JAPANESE WAS TOO QUICK...
YOU SLIPPERY LITTLE PERISHER!
AAARGH!

THE FIGHT WAS SHORT AND SHARP, BUT THE END WAS INEVITABLE...
COME ON, LADS! IT'S NO GOOD— SHE'S GOING DOWN!

GARDNER WAS WAITING FOR THEM WHEN THEY RETURNED TO THE BEACH, AND HIS RECEPTION WAS FAR FROM CORDIAL...
I TOLD YOU TO STAY ON THE BEACH, NUMBER ONE! I'M GETTING TIRED OF YOUR DISOBEDIENCE OF ORDERS!
BE YOUR AGE, COBBER! IF I HADN'T DISOBEYED ORDERS, YOU WOULDN'T BE ALIVE!

THE COMMANDER CONTROLLED HIS TEMPER WITH AN EFFORT.
GET BACK TO THE SHIP, ALL OF YOU ... TONIGHT'S RAID WILL HAVE TO BE POSTPONED. WE'VE WASTED TOO MUCH TIME, ANYWAY.
I WOULDN'T CALL IT A WASTE OF TIME MYSELF, TONIGHT'S LITTLE SPREE HAS COST THE NIPS ONE PERFECTLY GOOD SUB!

AS SOON AS THEY WERE BACK ABOARD THE DESTROYER, SIMMONDS WAS SUMMONED TO THE COMMANDER'S CABIN.
I HAVE TO THANK YOU NUMBER ONE, FOR SAVING MY LIFE TWICE TODAY. BUT ON THE SECOND OCCASION YOU WERE ACTING AGAINST ORDERS. UNTIL I GIVE PERMISSION YOU WILL NOT LEAVE THE SHIP! IS THAT UNDERSTOOD?
WELL, BLOW ME DOWN!

EVEN AS HE SPOKE, GARDNER KNEW HE WAS BEING UNREASONABLE.
STONE THE CROWS, SKIP— YOU'RE NOT SERIOUS? I'VE GOT WORK TO DO!
YOUR WORK IS ABOARD THE SHIP, NUMBER ONE, UNTIL I SAY OTHERWISE. THAT IS ALL!

FROM THE LOOK ON THE AUSTRALIAN'S FACE, IT WAS OBVIOUS THAT HE WOULD OBEY THAT ORDER FOR ONLY AS LONG AS IT SUITED HIM.
THE STARCHY POMMIE STUFFED-SHIRT! HE'S GOT ANOTHER THINK COMING. I'M GOING AFTER THAT CODE BOOK AT FIRST LIGHT AND THAT'S FOR SURE!

IN THE FIRST GREY LIGHT OF DAWN NEXT MORNING, A CANOE QUIETLY LEFT THE BEACH AND HEADED FOR THE SPOT WHERE THE SUBMARINE HAD SUNK...
WHAT WE GOING TO LOOK FOR, MASTER? YOU WANT PEARL?
NO! I WANT YOU BOYS TO GO DOWN TO THE BOTTOM MAYBE AND FIND A BOOK. CAN DO?

THE NATIVES SHOWED NO SURPRISE AT THE UNUSUAL REQUEST. IN THEIR SIMPLE OPINION ALL THE WHITE MEN WERE SLIGHTLY MAD AND IT WAS BEST TO HUMOUR THEM...

GOOD ON YER, SPORT! IF YOU FIND IT I'LL GIVE YOU ALL THE PLUG TOBACCO YOU CAN CHEW!

CAN DO, TUAN! WE FETCH BOOK DOUBLE QUICK TIME!

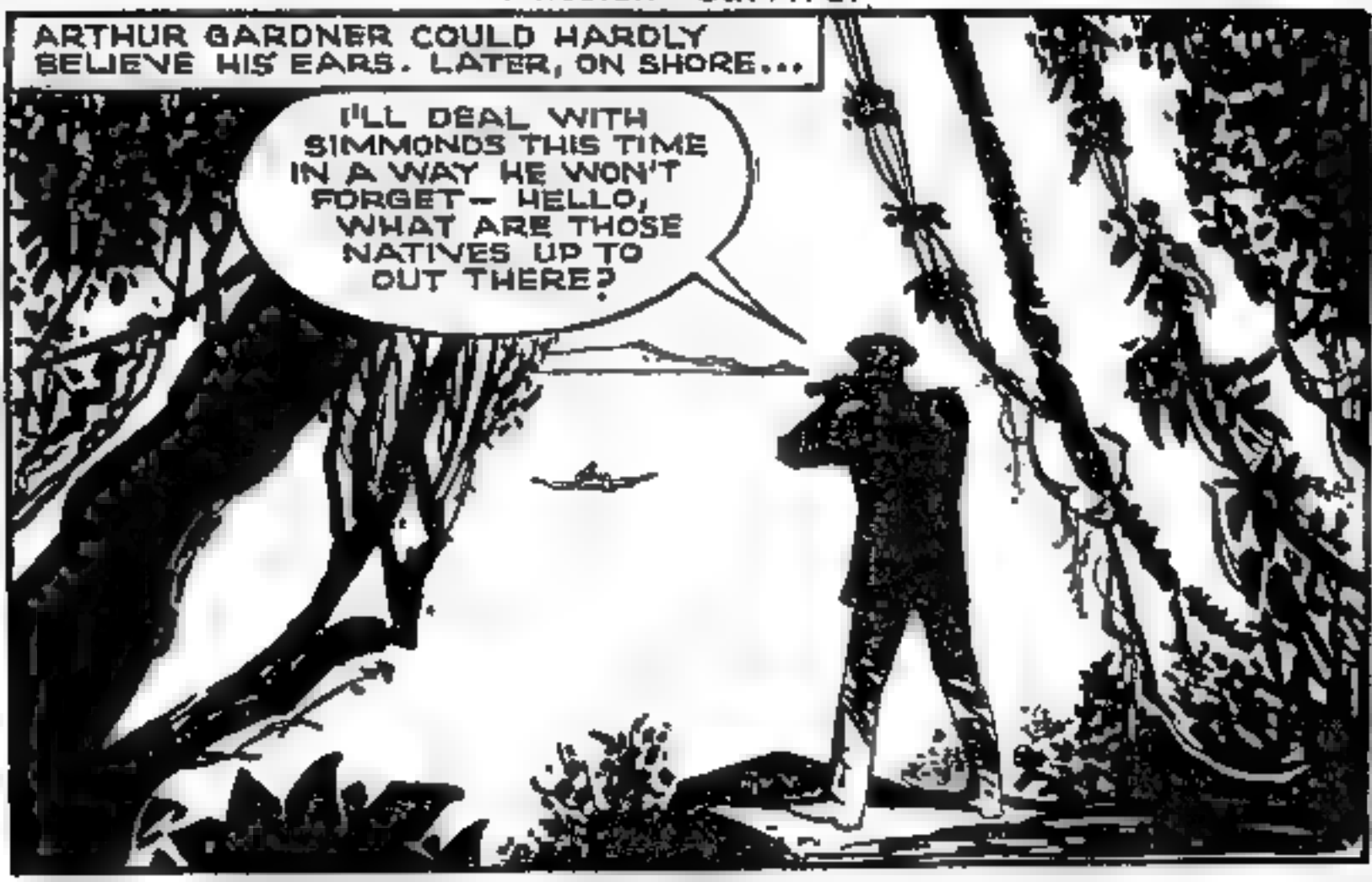
WATCHING THROUGH THE WATER-GLASS, SIMMONDS COULD SEE THE DARK OUTLINE OF THE WRECKED SUBMARINE AND HE KNEW THE CODE BOOK MUST BE NEAR AT HAND.

THIS IS LIKE OLD TIMES BEFORE THE NIPS BURNED MY SCHOONER — HEY, THAT BOYS IN TROUBLE...

WITHOUT HESITATION, THE AUSTRALIAN WAS OVER THE SIDE AND DIVING DOWN THROUGH THE CLEAR WATER, A PADDLE IN HIS HAND.

IT WAS A RACE AGAINST TIME, BUT SIMMONDS HAD FACED THAT SORT OF SITUATION BEFORE.
EXERTING ALL HIS STRENGTH, HE PRISED THE SHELLS APART WITH THE IRON-HARD HANDLE OF THE PADDLE.

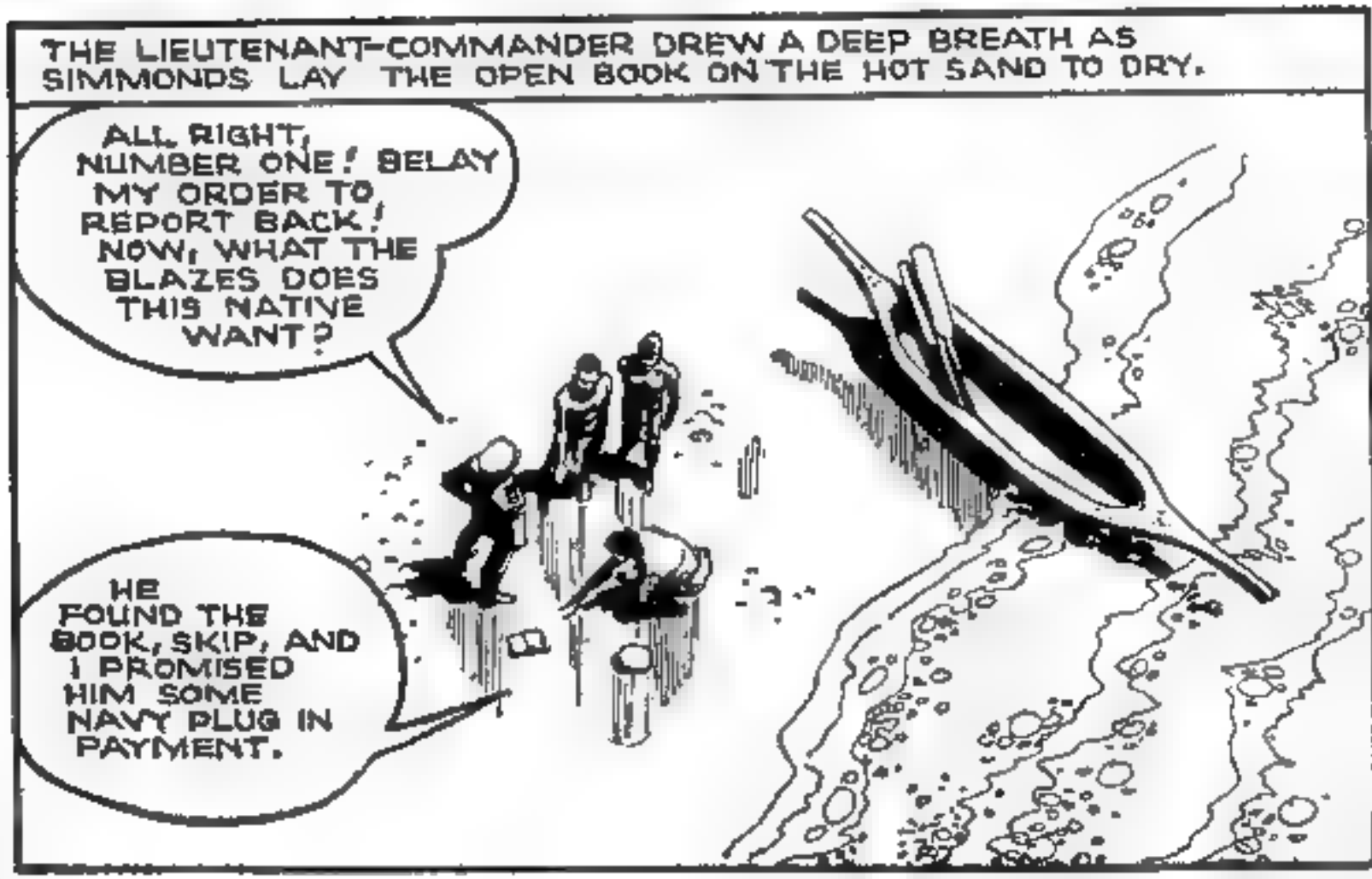
MEANWHILE, ABOARD THE DESTROYER, LIEUTENANT-COMMANDER GARDNER WAS PREPARING TO GO ASHORE.
TELL LIEUTENANT SIMMONDS THAT HE MAY JOIN ME ON THE BEACH AS SOON AS HE IS READY.
HE'S ALREADY ASHORE, SIR. HE LEFT THE SHIP AT FOUR BELLS...


ARTHUR GARDNER COULD HARDLY BELIEVE HIS EARS. LATER, ON SHORE...
I'LL DEAL WITH SIMMONDS THIS TIME IN A WAY HE WON'T FORGET— HELLO, WHAT ARE THOSE NATIVES UP TO OUT THERE?

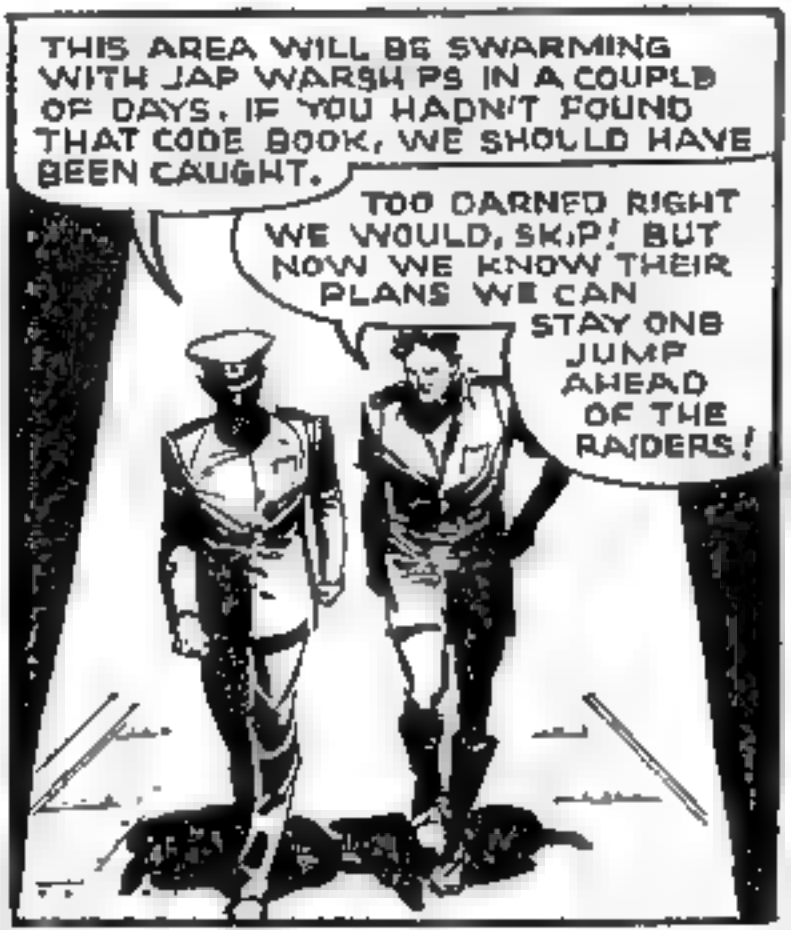
A SECOND GLANCE MADE HIM STUTTER WITH RAGE...
TH-THAT'S SIMMONDS OUT THERE! WHAT THE DEVIL DOES HE THINK HE'S DOING? HE'S IN FULL VIEW AGAIN OF ANY JAP ON THE OTHER ISLAND.

WITH A BROW LIKE THUNDER, GARDNER WAS WAITING AS SIMMONDS STEPPED ASHORE.
LIEUTENANT SIMMONDS! REPORT BACK TO THE SHIP. YOU ARE UNDER CLOSE ARREST!
BUTTON UP, POMMIE — YOU'RE WEARING THE RECORD THIN! TAKE A DEKKO AT THIS AND YOU'LL SEE WHY I SKIPPED SHIP THIS MORNING!

THANKFUL THAT THE ONLY TWO WITNESSES COULD NOT UNDERSTAND A WORD OF WHAT WAS BEING SAID, GARDNER GLANCED AT THE BOOK. THEN...
THE JAPANESE CODE BOOK! WHERE DID YOU GET THIS?
OFF THE SEA BED, SPORT! WITH THIS, WE CAN DECODE EVERY NIP MESSAGE WE PICK UP. HOW'S THAT, COBBER?


THE LIEUTENANT-COMMANDER DREW A DEEP BREATH AS SIMMONDS LAY THE OPEN BOOK ON THE HOT SAND TO DRY.
ALL RIGHT, NUMBER ONE! BELAY MY ORDER TO REPORT BACK! NOW, WHAT THE BLAZES DOES THIS NATIVE WANT?
HE FOUND THE BOOK, SKIP, AND I PROMISED HIM SOME NAVY PLUG IN PAYMENT.

Chapter 3. Trouble Island



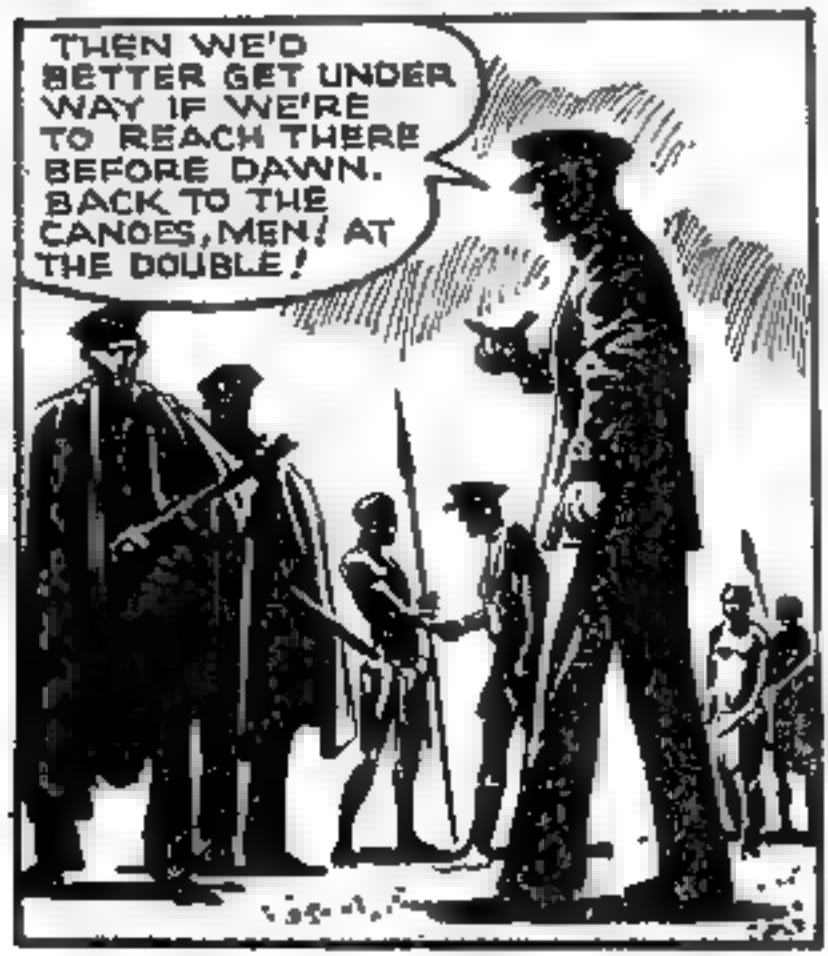
NOW THAT HE WAS FOREWARNED, GARDNER STEPPED UP HIS PLANS. IMMEDIATELY THE SUN HAD SET, A RAIDING PARTY CROSSED THE NARROW STRAIT...
NOW, YOU NIPS ...THIS IS WHERE I SQUARE SOME OF THE ACCOUNT FOR BURNING MY SCHOONER!
YOU'RE IN FOR A DISAPPOINTMENT, NUMBER ONE. YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE OF US WHO CAN TRANSLATE THAT CODE, SO WE CAN'T RISK LOSING YOU! YOU MUST STAY OUT OF THE FIGHTING!

LEAVING THE FURIOUS AUSTRALIAN AT THE WATER'S EDGE, THE LANDING PARTY HEADED INLAND.
WELL, STONE ME! OF ALL THE INGRATITUDE!

THE JAPANESE GARRISON OF THE ISLAND HAD BEEN THERE FOR NEARLY A YEAR AND NOTHING HAD EVER HAPPENED. THEIR SENTRIES WERE GETTING SLACK...
ON NIAS ISLAND THERE ARE ALWAYS THE GUERILLAS TO HUNT. HERE, NOTHING EVER HAPPENS!
HAVE PATIENCE. IN TWO DAYS WE TOO SHALL BE BUSY. THERE IS TOO BE A BIG OPERATION TO CAPTURE THE WHITE DOGS.

THOSE JAPANESE WERE FATED NEVER TO TAKE PART IN THAT OPERATION, FOR THEIR LACK OF VIGILANCE COST THEM THEIR LIVES.
COP THIS, YOU SWAB!
AGH!

THE BRIEF SKIRMISH ENDED AS SWIFTLY AS IT HAD BEGUN. SOON THEY WERE QUESTIONING ONE OF THE NATIVES OF THE ISLAND.
WHAT'S THE NATIVE SAYING, NUMBER ONE?
SAYS THERE IS A PARTY OF WHITE MEN HIDING IN THE MOUNTAINS ON NIAS ISLAND. THAT'S THE BIG ONE TEN MILES TO THE NOR' WEST.


THEN WE'D BETTER GET UNDER WAY IF WE'RE TO REACH THERE BEFORE DAWN. BACK TO THE CANOES, MEN! AT THE DOUBLE!

THE LITTLE FLOTILLA PUT TO SEA ONCE MORE.
THERE'S A STRONG NIP GARRISON THIS SIDE OF THE GUERILLAS' HIDE-OUT. IF ONLY THOSE LADS COULD ATTACK THE PERISHERS IN THE REAR WHEN THE RUCKUS STARTS...
THAT WOULD BE FINE — EXCEPT THAT WE HAVE NO MEANS OF WARNING THEM!

WELL, WE'VE GOT A WALKIE-TALKIE, AND THERE'S EVERY CHANCE THE GUERILLAS HAVE SOME SORT OF RADIO, TOO...
BUT EVEN IF THEY HAVE, WE CAN'T TALK IN PLAIN LANGUAGE OR THE JAPS WOULD PICK IT UP TOO. WE'D NEED A CODE...
BEG PARDON, SIR...

GARDNER MADE AN IMPATIENT GESTURE, BUT SIMMONDS TOLD THE MAN TO CONTINUE.
WHAT IS IT, CLARKE?
WELL, SIR,— IT'S ODDS ON SOME OF THEM GUERILLAS ARE COCKNEYS, LIKE ME. EVEN IF THE NIPS UNDERSTAND ENGLISH, THEY WOULDN'T RUMBLE A MESSAGE IN REAL COCKNEY SLANG. SHALL I HAVE A BASH, SIR?

THAT'S A BONZER IDEA, COBBER. THAT'LL MAKE A FAIR DINKUM CODE. WHAT DO YOU SAY, SKIP?
YES, IT MIGHT WORK! NOW LISTEN, CLARKE, HERE'S WHAT WE WANT TO TELL THEM...

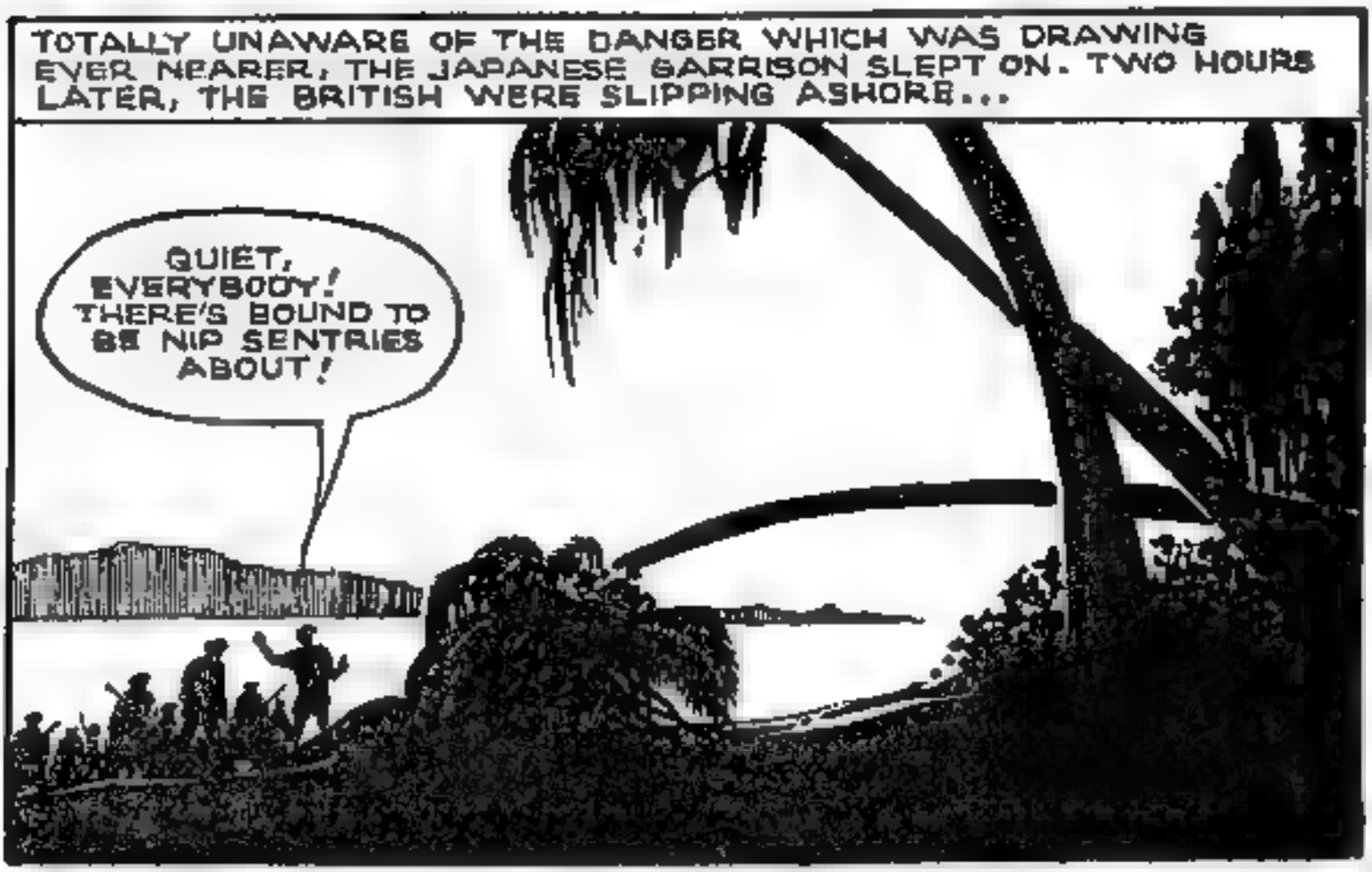
IN THE MOUNTAIN HIDE-OUT TEN MILES AWAY, A BATTERED RADIO CRACKLED INTO LIFE.
WOTCHER, ME OLD CHINAS. OPEN THE OLD MINCE PIES AND TAKE THE COTTON WOOL OUT OF YER LUGHOLES. IF THERE'S A GEEZER THERE FROM THE 'SMOKE', PJT 'IM ON THE BLOWER TOOT SWEET. OVER.
ACH! WHAT LANGUAGE IS THIS? IT DOES NOT MAKE SENSE!
IT DOES TO ME! GIVE IT 'ERE MATE!

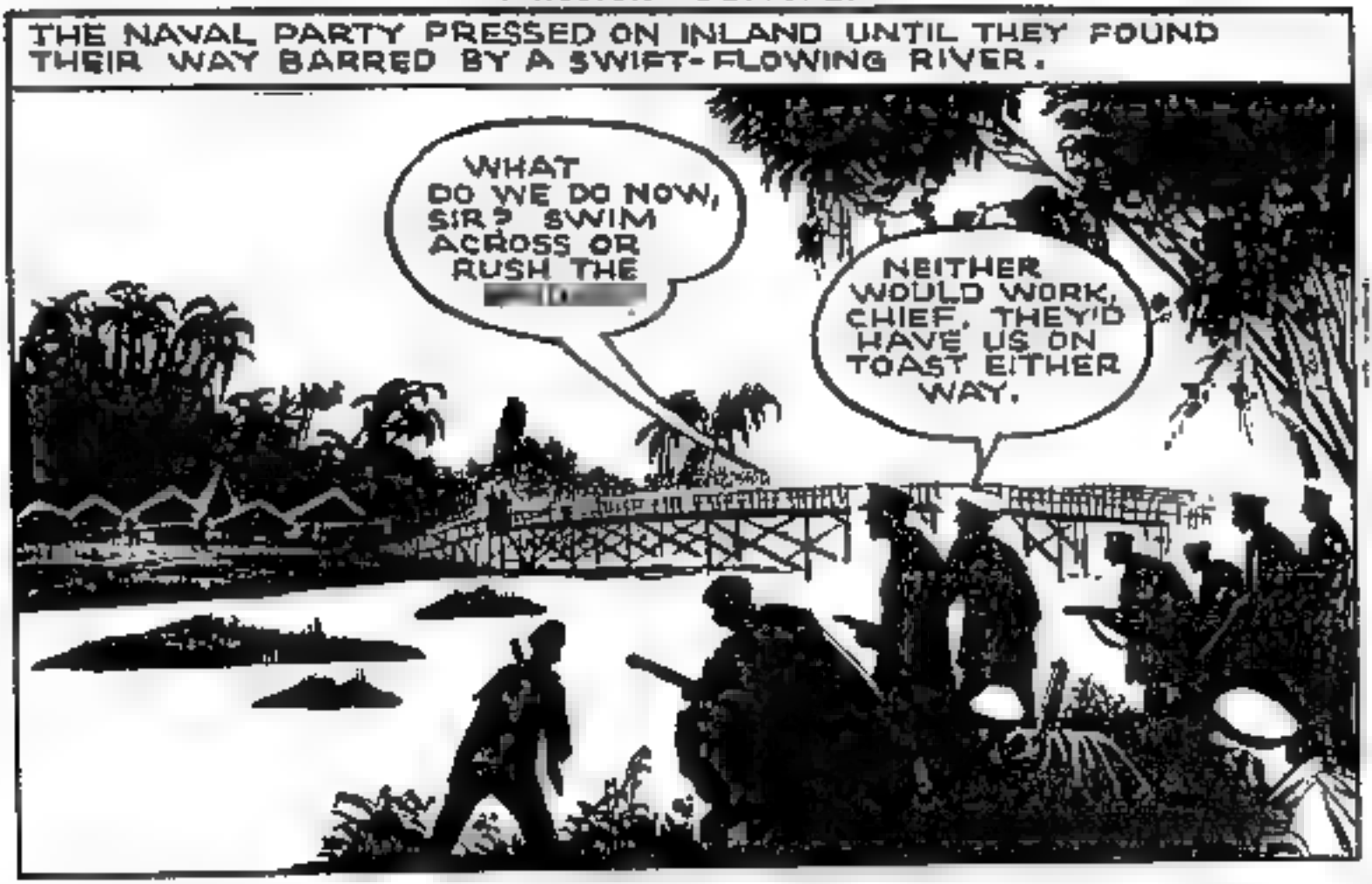
THE FUGITIVES STIRRED INTO WAKEFULNESS AS THE COCKNEY SOLDIER SPOKE RAPIDLY INTO THE MICROPHONE.
WOTCHER, COCK—I'M WIV YER! SPILL THE BEANS, MATE—WHAT'S COOKING? THE 'FISH AND CHIPS' WON'T TUMBLE—OVER.
JUMPING JACKASSES! WHAT IS THAT ALL ABOUT?
ENGLISH IT IS NOT!

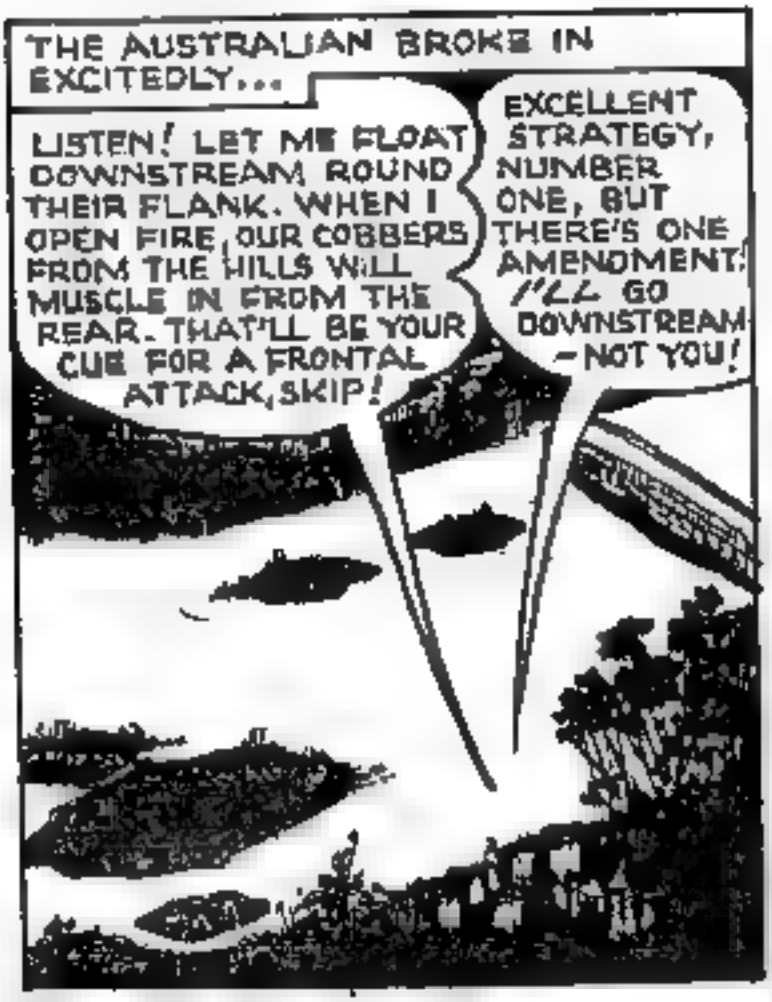
IN THE CANOE, THE TELEGRAPHIST GRINNED AT THE SUCCESS OF HIS IDEA.
YOU'VE GOT 'EM, COBBER! NOW TELL 'EM WE'RE ON OUR WAY AND THAT THEY ARE TO CLOBBER THE NIPS IN THE REAR WHEN THEY HEAR US OPEN FIRE!
YOU THERE, CHINA? 'ERE'S THE LAY. WHILE THE FISH AND CHIPS ARE DOSSING, WE'LL BE WIPING OUR PLATES ON THE WELCOME MAT. THEN THERE'LL BE A BIT OF A BARNEY. WHEN YOU 'EAR THE BULL AND COW GOIN' ON, NIP DOWN THE APPLES AND PEARS AND MUCK IN. OVER.

WHEN THAT MESSAGE HAD BEEN TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH WHICH ALL COULD UNDERSTAND, THERE WAS A BUSTLE OF ACTIVITY IN THE MOUNTAIN CAMP.
THERE'S A LANDING PARTY COMING BEFORE DAWN, GUV. THEY WANT US TO JOIN IN AS SOON AS WE 'EAR THEM OPEN FIRE!
ACH SO! WE WILL NOT KEEP OUR FRIENDS WAITING. STRIKE CAMP, EVERYBODY. THIS MAY BE OUR CHANCE TO GET OFF THE ISLAND.

THE JAPANESE HAD ALSO HEARD THAT BRIEF RADIO CONVERSATION, BUT ITS SIGNIFICANCE WAS QUITE LOST TO THEM.
WHAT WAS ALL THAT ABOUT, KYOTO?
NOTHING OF IMPORTANCE, EXCELLENCY. JUST TWO BRITISH SIGNALLERS TALKING ABOUT THEIR RATIONS OF FISH AND CHIPS, MINCE PIES, BEANS, AND APPLES AND PEARS!


TOTALLY UNAWARE OF THE DANGER WHICH WAS DRAWING EVER NEARER, THE JAPANESE GARRISON SLEPT ON. TWO HOURS LATER, THE BRITISH WERE SLIPPING ASHORE...
QUIET, EVERYBODY! THERE'S BOUND TO BE NIP SENTRIES ABOUT!


THE NAVAL PARTY PRESSED ON INLAND UNTIL THEY FOUND THEIR WAY BARRED BY A SWIFT-FLOWING RIVER.
WHAT DO WE DO NOW, SIR? SWIM ACROSS OR RUSH THE [redacted]
NEITHER WOULD WORK, CHIEF. THEY'D HAVE US ON TOAST EITHER WAY.


THE AUSTRALIAN BROKE IN EXCITEDLY...
LISTEN! LET ME FLOAT DOWNSTREAM ROUND THEIR FLANK. WHEN I OPEN FIRE, OUR COBBERS FROM THE HILLS WILL MUSCLE IN FROM THE REAR. THAT'LL BE YOUR CUE FOR A FRONTAL ATTACK, SKIP!
EXCELLENT STRATEGY, NUMBER ONE, BUT THERE'S ONE AMENDMENT: I'LL GO DOWNSTREAM —NOT YOU!

SIMMONDS EXPLODED FURIOUSLY AT THAT.
LOOK HERE, SPORT—YOU CAN'T DRY-DOCK ME JUST BECAUSE I'M THE ONLY COVE WHO CAN SPEAK THE NIP LINGO.
YOU'LL STAY HERE—AND THAT'S AN ORDER!

SIMMONDS SEETHED WITH INDIGNATION AS A TANGLED BUNDLE OF FLOTSAM WAS GATHERED TOGETHER.
ONE FINAL THING, WHEN IT'S ALL OVER, WE GET OUT QUICK. THERE'LL BE NO TIME TO STOP FOR ANY WOUNDED. THEY MUST TAKE THEIR CHANCE!
WITH THAT, GARDNER LET GO AND DRIFTED QUIETLY OUT INTO THE STREAM. A MOMENT LATER, HE WAS SWALLOWED UP IN THE GLOOM...
LEAVE THE WOUNDED! WHY, THE COLD-BLOODED SO-AND-SO! WHAT SORT OF AN ORDER IS THAT?
IT SEEMS TOUGH, SIR, BUT IT'S THE USUAL PRACTICE IN JUNGLE FIGHTING.

STILL NO SOUND BROKE THE STILLNESS OF THE NIGHT. GARDNER WAS WELL ROUND THE CURVE OF THE RIVER AND EASING IN TOWARDS THE ENEMY BANK...

IN THE JAPANESE GUARD HUT, THE FIRST BREATH OF ALARM WAS RAISED.

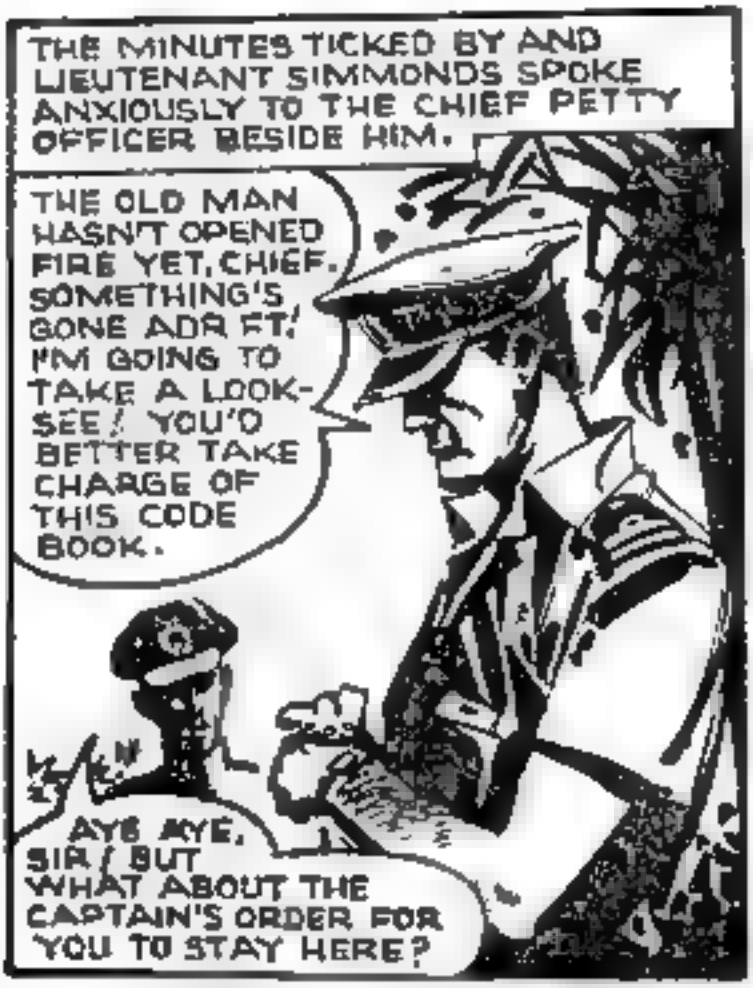
THE BEACH SENTRY DOES NOT ANSWER, SERGEANT OKUSA! SHALL I RING HIM AGAIN?

NO! I WILL GO TO HIS POST MYSELF! IF I FIND THE FOOL IS ASLEEP, HE WILL BE SHOT!

IT WAS SHEER BAD LUCK THAT BROUGHT THE SERGEANT ON TO THE RIVER BANK AT THE VERY MOMENT THAT ARTHUR GARDNER CLAMBERED ASHORE.

BY SHINTO! A BRITISHER!

GARDNER FLUNG HIMSELF AT THE BURLY JAPANESE— BUT THE OTHER MOVED ALMOST AS QUICKLY...
THAT'LL SHUT YOUR— AAGH!
THE NAVAL OFFICER HAD LUNGED ON TO THE BAYONET EVEN AS THE SERGEANT DROPPED TO THE GROUND.


THE MINUTES TICKED BY AND LIEUTENANT SIMMONDS SPOKE ANXIOUSLY TO THE CHIEF PETTY OFFICER BESIDE HIM.
THE OLD MAN HASN'T OPENED FIRE YET, CHIEF. SOMETHING'S GONE ADRIFT! I'M GOING TO TAKE A LOOK-SEE! YOU'D BETTER TAKE CHARGE OF THIS CODE BOOK.
AYE AYE, SIR! BUT WHAT ABOUT THE CAPTAIN'S ORDER FOR YOU TO STAY HERE?

SIMMONDS GAVE A GRIM SMILE AS HE SLIPPED INTO THE WATER...
TO BLAZES WITH HIS ORDER!

A FEW MINUTES LATER, SIMMONDS SCRAMBLED ASHORE ROUND THE BEND OF THE RIVER— AND SAW GARDNER AND THE JAPANESE.
STONE THE CROWS! IT'S A GOOD JOB I CAME!

TOO MUCH TIME HAD ALREADY BEEN WASTED. THE ATTACK MUST BEGIN AT ONCE.
NOW, YOU DIRTY DINGOES, LATCH ON TO THIS!

FROM THE JUNGLE BEHIND THE JAPANESE CAMP, AN ANSWERING VOLLEY RIPPED THROUGH THE FLIMSY BAMBOO HUTS. THE GUERILLAS SWEPT INTO ACTION...
NOW, MY FRIENDS! LET US WIPE OUT THE JAPANESE DOGS!
LET 'EM 'AVE IT, MATES! COP THIS, YOU 'ORRIBLE LOT!

TAKEN COMPLETELY BY SURPRISE, THE BEWILDERED JAPANESE SCRAMBLED FROM THEIR HUTS AND FLED IN THE ONLY DIRECTION STILL OPEN TO THEM — AWAY FROM THE RIVER.
GOODO! THAT'S SEEING 'EM OFF!

WITH A DEEP THROATED CHEER, THE PARTY FROM H.M.S. TRESCO SWARMED ACROSS THE FLIMSY BRIDGE — AND THE ROUT OF THE JAPANESE WAS COMPLETE.
GAAAH!
COME ON, MEN! LET 'EM HAVE IT!
TRY THAT FOR SIZE, YOU LITTLE BILGE-RAT!

AS SUDDENLY AS IT HAD BEGUN, THE FIRING DIED AWAY. SIMMONDS WENT TO MEET THE GIANT BEARDED DUTCHMAN.
THANK YOU FOR RESCUING US, MEINHEER! I AM VAN VEERMAN, CIVIL ADMINISTRATOR FROM PADANG.
GLAD TO MEET YOU, SPORT. YOU'RE THE COVE WE WERE SENT TO FIND, BUT WE AIN'T OUT OF THE WOOD YET. THOSE NIPS WILL BE BACK.

AS THE SAILORS AND THE GUERILLAS BEGAN TO WITHDRAW TO THE CANOES, THE AUSTRALIAN SOUGHT OUT GARDNER WHO HAD BEEN HAVING HIS WOUND DRESSED.
THANKS, DOC! NOW LEAVE ME A WATER BOTTLE AND MY REVOLVER AND THEN GET UNDER WAY, BOTH OF YOU! THAT'S AN ORDER!
GO ON, PILLS—YOU HEARD WHAT THE MAN SAID! BUT FIRST GIVE HIM A SHOT WITH THAT HYPODERMIC TO DEADEN THE PAIN!
GARDNER FAILED TO SEE THE WINK OF UNDERSTANDING THAT PASSED BETWEEN HIS TWO SUBORDINATES...

AS THE DRUG BEGAN TO TAKE EFFECT ON GARDNER, THE FIGHTING FLARED UP ANEW.
GO ON, LEAVE ME! YOU'RE NEEDED WITH THAT CODE BOOK, NUMBER ONE.

THE NEAREST JAPANESE WERE CLOSING IN ON THEM...
GET HIM AWAY, PILLS. I'LL TAKE OVER IN A MINUTE! AS FOR YOU, UGLY MUG— LATCH ON TO THIS!
UGH!

THEN, COVERED BY A BURST OF FIRE FROM THE REARGUARD, SIMMONDS HOISTED THE LIMP FORM OF THE LIEUTENANT-COMMANDER ACROSS HIS BROAD SHOULDERS AND BEGAN TO RUN.
HURRY, SIR! WE CAN'T HOLD 'EM MUCH LONGER!

AS THEY RACED ACROSS THE SWAYING BRIDGE, A FUSILLADE CUT DOWN THE NEAREST OF THEIR PURSUERS ...
GOOD ON YER, DUTCHY! NICE SHOOTIN', SPORT!

THE MOMENT THEY WERE ACROSS, A SAILOR SLASHED THE ROPES WHICH HELD THE BRIDGE, SENDING THE WHOLE CRAZY STRUCTURE PLUNGING INTO THE RIVER.
COME ON, BLOKES! THE SOONER WE'RE OFF THIS CABBAGE PATCH THE BETTER!

HALF AN HOUR LATER, THEY CLIMBED FROM THEIR LADEN CANOES ON TO THE DESTROYER.
GLAD TO SEE YOU BACK, SIR. WHAT ARE YOUR ORDERS?
GET BACK TO AUSSIE JUST AS FAST AS WE CAN, SON. THOSE NIPS ON THE ISLAND WILL HAVE WARNED THEIR HEADQUARTERS AND THEIR NAVY WILL BE ON THE LOOKOUT FOR US.

SIMMONDS' PROPHECY PROVED TO BE ALL TOO TRUE ALTHOUGH A WHOLE DAY WENT BY BEFORE THE ENEMY WERE SIGHTED.

I HAVE BROUGHT BAD LUCK TO YOUR SHIP, MEINHEER! THE JAPANESE DO NOT INTEND TO LET ME ESCAPE. PUT ME OVER THE SIDE IN A BOAT AND LET THEM CAPTURE ME. PERHAPS YOUR SHIP COULD THEN GET AWAY.

WE'RE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER, COBBER. SIGNALMAN...

L08

WITH THE CAPTURED CODE BOOK SPREAD OUT BEFORE HIM, SIMMONDS WROTE SWIFTLY ON A MESSAGE PAD.

GIVE THIS TO SPARKS. IT'S IN THE NIP CODE TELLING THAT LOT TO TURN EAST. WITH ANY LUCK, THEY'LL THINK IT HAS COME FROM TOKYO.

BARELY HAD THE OPERATOR FINISHED TAPPING HIS MORSE KEY THAN THE DISTANT SHIPS WERE SEEN TO CHANGE DIRECTION.
ANOTHER SIGNAL, SPARKS. IN OUR OWN CODE THIS TIME, TO FLAG OFFICER, PORT DARWIN. THE POSITION AND COURSE OF THEM NIPS. JIMMY THE ONE SAYS TO BASH IT OFF URGENT!

AT THE JAPANESE NAVAL HEADQUARTERS IN TOKYO, NOTHING SEEMED TO BE GOING RIGHT THAT MORNING.
OUR SQUADRON HAS TURNED AWAY TO THE EAST, EXCELLENCY, AND WE CANNOT CONTACT THEM. THE BRITISH ARE JAMMING OUR FREQUENCY!
BY ALL THE SWORDS OF THE SAMURAI! ON THAT COURSE THEY WILL RUN INTO THE AUSTRALIAN NAVY.

THE JAPANESE ADMIRAL'S GLOOMY ASSESSMENT OF THE SITUATION WAS PROPHETIC.
I HAVE TO THANK YOU FOR FINDING MYSELF HERE INSTEAD OF IN A NIP PRISON CAMP, NUMBER ONE! GIVING YOU ORDERS APPEARS TO BE JUST SO MUCH WASTE OF BREATH... HELLO, WHAT'S THAT GUNFIRE?
JUST A NIP SQUADRON BEING CLOBBERED BY THE DIGGER NAVY, SKIP.

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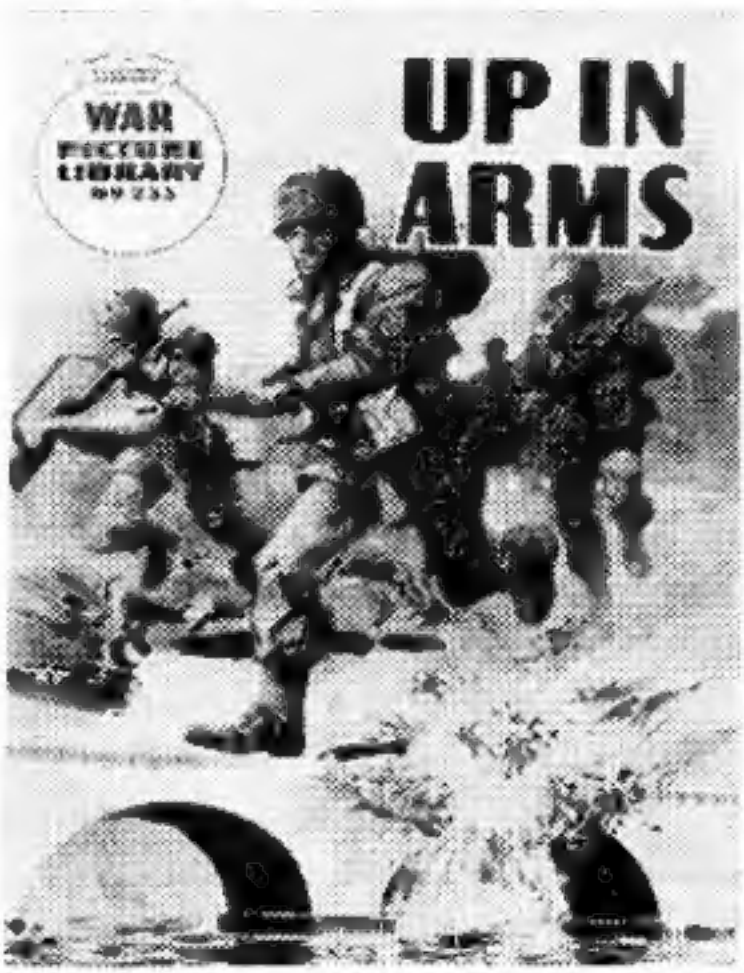

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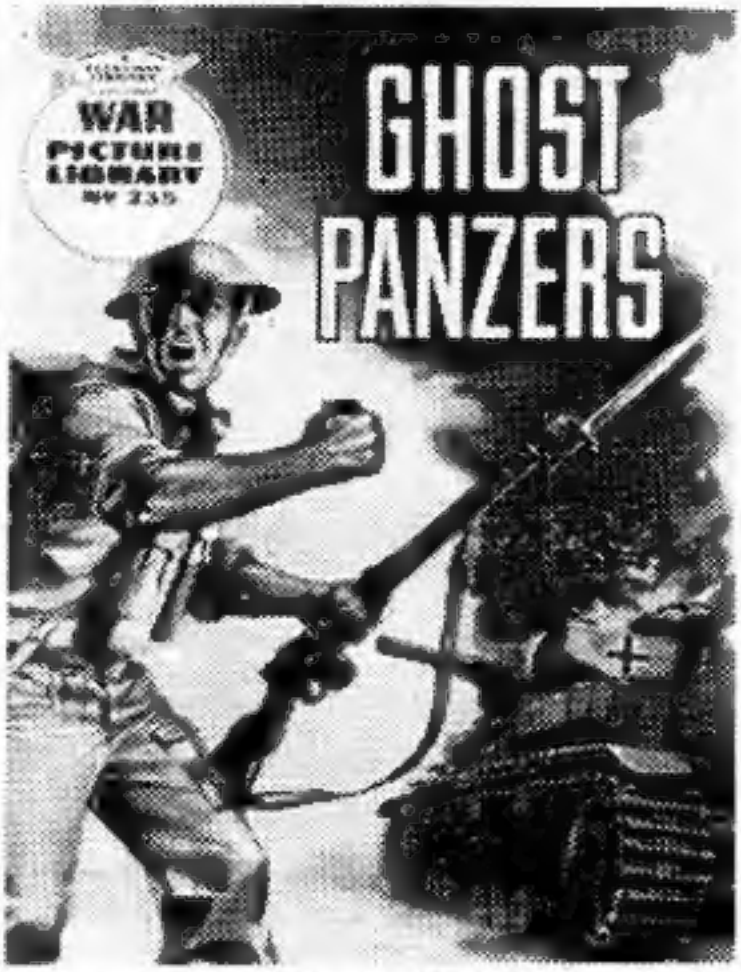

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